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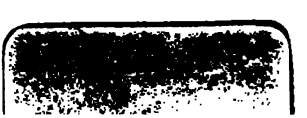

# MARGARET GRAHAM:

A Tale,

FOUNDED ON FACTS.

BY G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF "THE GIPSY,"

ETC. ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following short tale needs very little prefatory matter, as both the general construction and the details are exceedingly simple. It may be as well, however, to inform the reader that it can hardly be called a fiction; for though two histories—that of Allan Fairfax, and that of Margaret Graham—have been blended into one, each is more than founded upon fact. I should not probably be justified in giving the

names of the persons from whom I received them without permission, which I have not time to obtain; but both the gentleman, Captain F——, who related to me the story of my hero, and Mrs. S—— ——, to whom I am indebted for that of my heroine, are persons of undoubted veracity, and vouched for the truth of the narrative. I will only add, that I have not had an opportunity of correcting the press since the work appeared in a periodical; and that when the first part of it was printed even there, I was many miles distant from my native land.

THE AUTHOR.

# Part the First.

## THE DAYS OF PROSPERITY.

# CHAPTER I.

## THE LABOURER'S RETURN.

THE much-abused climate of England has its advantages both in point of the picturesque and the agreeable. Not only have we an infinite variety, which in itself is one of the great sources of pleasure, but we have beauties which no other land possesses. I have stood under the deep blue sky of Italy, longing more for a cloud than

ever I did for sunshine, when, day after day, and week after week, and month after month, went by, without a film of vapour as big as a man's hand coming to relieve the monotony, or cast a flitting shadow on the earth. I have stood beneath the burning suns of Spain, and longed for a refreshing shower, or even a softening mist, while through the whole of a long summer not a drop has fallen to moisten the stones in the dry water-courses, or wet the crisp leaves of the cork tree. The cloud and the shower have all the time been giving beautiful variety to the English summer, and our own fair land has been alternately in shadow and in light, glittering with drops or sparkling in the beams.

There may be a blaze of glory and a fiery power in southern countries which our island never knows; but where is the silvery light which so often at morning or at evening steals through the prospect, casting its gentle gleam upon the waters, the woods, and fields, like the blessed influence of a calm and gentle spirit upon all that it approaches.

One of the peculiar advantages of more northern lands is the long twilight which follows the close of day. There is certainly something grand and fine, in hotter climates, in the sudden plunge of the sun beneath the horizon, and the instantaneous darkness that succeeds, but it little compensates for the calm half hour

of waning light, when the star of day seems to withdraw his beams as with regret, and to leave a blessing when he bids good night.

The sun had just sunk—indeed, I cannot be sure that he was absolutely below the horizon, for there were lines of black-blue cloud drawn across the verge of the sky, and the lines were edged with gold. Above was a wide sheet of heavy cloud, low down and flat, like a ceiling of black marble, beneath, and confined by which, the whole rays poured on in horizontal lines, catching the edges of mountain and fell, and wood and moor, and casting long shadows from a solitary fir-tree and the finger-post with its long bare arms. That finger-post pointed,

in one direction, to a small town in Cumberland, which I shall call Brownswick, and in the other, to a village, which probably would not have had the honour of being pointed out at all, had not several gentlemen of the fore-mentioned town thought fit to build themselves country-houses in its neighbourhood. The attraction was a little lake, much less in dimensions indeed than Windermere, but hardly less beautiful in the scenery which surrounded it. No indication of such scenery being in the vicinity was afforded from the spot where the finger-post was placed. It was a dull wide moor, covered with withered heath, and here and there patches of broom and gorse. On one hand you saw down a wide

broken slope, presenting nothing but irregular undulations for several miles except a pit or a little pond, till, in the extreme distance blue lines of wood and field were seen, not at all unlike those of the sky on which they rested, only broken by the spire of a church, and what seemed an old solitary tower. On the other hand the moor continued to rise, showing a high bank, which cut off the view of everything beyond. It was a desolate scene and chill; heavy and hard, but not without its sublimity—from the extent, and the solitude, and the depth of the tones. Let the reader remark it, for we may have to do with it hereafter. At present, it is only necessary to say, that just when the sun was setting,

if not quite set, as I have said, two labouring men walked along the road, under the finger-post, taking a direction from the town, and towards the village. It must be remembered that these two points were some nine miles apart, and that the finger-post stood about half-way.

Clothed in the common dress of the country, with smock-frocks upon their shoulders, and coarse leathern gaiters upon their legs, the aspect of the two labourers showed nothing more than that they were both stout fellows of about the middle age. One might be forty, the other forty-two or three. They were both tall, as most Cumberland men are, but one had an inch or so the advantage of the other. Their pace was

slow, as if they were somewhat weary, and their gait was heavy and awkward, such as is gained by walking over ploughed fields at the tail of a plough or harrow; yet they were neither of them stupid, nor altogether ignorant men.

It has long been a common mistake, and even since the mistake must have been clearly perceived and corrected in the minds of most men, it has become a common party falsehood to draw comparisons disadvantageous to the agricultural classes, between them and the manufacturing class. Those whom it is intended to oppress, it is generally found necessary to calumniate, and the most popular means of promulgating a dangerous error, is to ridicule all those who oppose it.

Such has been the case with the agricultural labourer and small farmer. In point of plain common sense, and natural strength of intellect, they are generally very far superior to parallel classes in the manufacturing districts. It is true they are practical more than theoretical in all their proceedings; that they are less quick, less ready, perhaps both in mind and body, than the artisan or shopkeeper of a town, but, at the same time, their notions are sounder, firmer, more precise, as their bodies are more vigorous, healthy, and enduring; and no class of men have I ever met with more capable of arriving at a just opinion upon a plain proposition, than those classes which have been called stupid, ignorant, and pre-

judiced. Learning, perhaps, they do not possess. Scattered thinly over a wide tract of country, instead of gathered into the close communion of towns, they have few opportunities of expressing their sentiments as a body, or of uniting for one common object; but in those cottages, and there are many of them, where such excellent cheap publications as those of Chambers and Knight have penetrated, I have heard reasonings on the subjects submitted, which, though the language might be rude, would not have disgraced, in point of intellect, any society in the world. I am convinced, that if plain common sense be, as I believe it, the most excellent quality of the mind, that quality is to be found more frequently than anywhere

else in the yeoman and peasant class of England.

As the two yeomen plodded on towards the home of rest, they were evidently busy with some subject that interested them deeply. More than once they stopped, turned round towards each other, and spoke earnestly, with more gesticulation, at least on one part, than is common among the phlegmatic nations of the north.

Let us listen awhile to their conversation, for it may have its interest.

"'Fore half of them are paid for," said the shortest of the two men, "they will have to pull them down, and then all the money is wasted."

"Money enough to feed half of the poor of the country, if it were well managed," said

the other, jogging on by his companion's side; "but it is all a job, Ben. They wanted to put out the old rogues and put in new ones, and so they made places for them. The gentlemen pretended, when they got up this new law, that the poor's-rates were eating up all the property of the country. That was a lie, Ben, in the first place; but even if it were true, I wonder whose fault that was if not the magistrates' who suffered it?"

"Part theirs, part other folks," answered the man called Ben; "but it was a queer way to begin their saving to pull down, or sell for an old song, or leave to rot by themselves, all the old houses, and build new ones upon the plan of costing

as much as possible. Why I calculate that our own union-house will cost as much as a quarter of the poor's-rates of all the parishes in the union for twenty years to come. They must pinch very close to save that, and something more into the bargain."

"I don't understand what you mean, Ben," said the other man, "about its being only part the magistrates' fault; I think it was their fault altogether. Why, when I lived over at Brownswick, I saw how the overseers and fellows used to go on. They had eleven parish dinners, as they call them, at the Sun, in the year, and each man of them was allowed a half-a-guinea for his dinner, and there were all kinds of other perquisites. Be-

sides that, they were for ever making jobs for each other. There was Mr. Weston, the hatter, found out that the court-yard wanted paving, though it had only been paved twelve months before, and Mr. Greensides, another of the board, had the paving of it; but then as a match for that, Mr. Greensides found out that it would be much better for all the parish boys to have hats instead of caps, and Mr. Weston had the supplying of them. It was so well known a thing, that all the contracts for the workhouse went amongst themselves, that no one, unless he was one of the board, ever offered at all; so they got just what price they liked. Now what were the magistrates and gentlemen about

not to stop such things? It was a very good law, Ben, if it had been rightly worked, but those who were put to look after it either cheated themselves or let others cheat, and then cried out that the rates were eating up all the rents. I tell you what, Ben, I have often thought that old poor-law was a very safe thing in times of famine or want of work. Men wont stand and see their children starve. If people don't give them food, they will take it, and once they begin taking, will take something more. I recollect hearing a lecturer man say, that the first duty of the soil was the support of every one upon it, and then I thought it was a very lucky thing that there was a law for mak-

ing it do that duty in a regular sort of way, rather than let those who wanted support take it where they could find it."

"They would tell you the same is the case now," answered Ben, "though it is not, Jacob; for it is a very different case when a man who could get a little work, and was willing to do as much as he could get, went to the parish for a few shillings to eke it out. He could then always go on and look out for more to do. He had something to hold fast by, but now if he can get only five shillings a week, and his family cannot be kept upon less than ten, he must either see some of them starve, or give up his cottage, sell his goods, put himself out of the way of all work, and

go as a pauper to the Union, where he is separated from his wife and children, and fed and treated worse than one of the prisoners in the gaol. Then when he comes out, he comes out as a pauper, and finds it ten times more difficult to get work than before, let his character be ever so good. A thousand to one he is a ruined man for ever, and has no spirit left but to hate those who have been ill-treating him. Many a man who has no religion, thinks he may just as well pilfer a bit, and take his chance of getting into gaol, where he is sure to be better treated than in the Union; and all that might be saved by giving a few shillings a week where it is really wanted. Besides, you see, Jacob, it

was a great check upon masters—the only check, indeed, we had. One farmer did not like another giving too little wages, because his men were sure to get the rest from the parish, and then the rates rose —but that brings me to what you asked; I say it was partly our own fault, Ben, that all these things have been changed in such a way — not mine, because I never had a sixpence of the parish in my life— but every blackguard used to go and cheat the magistrates through thick and thin. I recollect Jemmy Anderson, when he was getting sixteen or seventeen shillings a week as a carter's shoemaker, going out and getting ten shillings from one parish, and eight from another every week of his life."

"From two parishes?" cried Jacob.

"Ay, he managed it," answered his companion, "by a little hard swearing, and there was many a one like him. Our officers found him out, and refused to give him any more, but the impudent varment went up before the magistrates and took his oath, and the magistrate made an order upon the parish. So he had it all his own way."

"And was not that the magistrate's fault, Ben?" asked his friend; "the law did not force them to do anything of the kind unless they liked it."

"I don't know," answered the other, "I never saw the law, Jacob; but I do believe that very good laws are turned into very

bad ones by the way that magistrates and other people go on, one changing a little of the meaning and another changing a little, till it is not the same thing at all. But one thing is certain, that there were many folks amongst ourselves who were in the wrong, though the magistrates were in the wrong too. Still there was no need of doing away a good law because foolish people had not used it right, and bad people had abused it; or, if they did change it, they might have made it better, not worse; less heavy upon the rich, but not throw all the weight upon the poor. They'll have to change it again, depend upon it, or else not act up to it, which is worse; for the people won't bear it much longer."

"They'll not change it, unless they are driven," answered Jacob; "one of their objects is to lower wages, Ben, all over England, whether here or in the factories, and the new law is their greatest help; for, don't you see, we have no chance. We must take just what they will give, or starve, or rob, or go to worse than a prison."

"I'd rather starve in my own cottage than go to a Union," said Ben, "if it were not for the children. I could not bear to hear them cry for bread. However, I do not know that it is one of their objects to bring our labour down, though they've certainly taken a good way to do so, Jacob; and it is such laws as these that make

poor men wish they had some hand in making the laws; for they find none made by others for their good. Some of the gentlemen wish to do it, I do believe, but they do not know how; and the end is, they put the sheep into the paws of the wolf, and tell the wolf to take good care of them; and then they call that political economy. It is the same in factory places. The master can do just what he likes, and the workman has no hold upon him. Work as hard as he will, he is cheated one way or another of half his earnings; if he grumbles, he is turned out to starve; if he goes to the poor-house, he is worse than a galley-slave, as they call it, and if he goes to a new factory to seek other work, he will not get it

if he has been turned off for grumbling at the last: for the masters are allowed to combine, as people say, against their workmen, though not the workmen against the masters. I heard it all from poor Will Simpson, when he came back, after having worked himself into a decline, to die amongst his own people.

"It is very hard!" said Jacob, "but these Parliament men never will reckon all the power that money gives to a man; and they do not consider either what a greed a man who is making a great deal has to make more, though he drains men's blood to do it. If they did but think of these two points, they would never put the labourer entirely at the mercy of his em-

ployer, or have the employer and employer's friends and cronies to take care of the laws that are made for the good of the labourer. We take these things quietly, Ben, because our master is one out of a hundred; but I can tell you, that all the farmers about are already lowering their wages, and I heard Old Stumps grumbling at Mr. Graham for not lowering his."

"Master wont do that, unless corn comes down a good deal," said the other; "he knows what the value of a man's work is, and does not think how low he can get him to labour, but how much he can afford to give. I think, Jacob, however, we had better be jogging on a little faster, or we shall get in wet."

"The blink of light is shutting up very fast," answered the other man, "and the wind is coming sobbing over the moor like a naughty child: signs of rain, sure enough; and there will be a gale too: don't you see how the dust is swirling round and round!"

As he spoke, they somewhat quickened their pace, and walked on for a mile without quitting the road that crossed the moor. By the time that mile was passed over, however, the clear space at the edge of the sky was covered with black cloud, and though the arch of the vapoury canopy above was still tinged with a faint shade of purple, all looked lurid and heavy, and twilight was waning fast.

At length, upon the edge of the moor—

and, indeed, stolen from it about fifty years before—was a track of woodland, through which the rushing wind was heard rising higher and higher every moment, while a few large drops of rain fell pattering amongst the crisp yellow leaves that strewed the ground beneath.

"Hark!" cried the man named Ben, as they were following the path into the wood; "there is some one hallooing down below there."

"It is that devil's imp, Tommy Hicks," said the other; "I know his shout well enough. He is worse than a will-o'-the-wisp of nights, and I'll break his bones for him some day."

"Nonsense, Jacob—nonsense!" said the

other; "he is but an idiot, man, and you would not go to hit a thing that's got no sense."

"He has sense enough to do a deal of mischief," answered Jacob; "and he never loses time when any is to be done. A licking would do him a vast deal of good. Why, he nearly strangled Mrs. Gibbs's boy t'other day, because he would not let him take away his mother's turnips."

"He is a spiteful chap," answered Ben; "and I don't let him come near our place for fear of his doing mischief to some of the children; but I don't hit him, for all that. I wonder what he is hooting and hallooing at that way."

"Just because he sees us walking along,

and wishes to lead us into a pond or a moss," said the other; "but the rain is coming fast, and we shan't get home very dry, do what we will."

Concluding that it was as his companion said, and that the shout proceeded from an idiot well known in the country, the other man pursued the path through the wood, merely saying—

"I wonder they don't shut up Tommy Hicks in one of their Unions, or such sort of places; there is many a man a great deal wiser than he is put into a madhouse for life."

The belt of wood was soon passed, and about a quarter of a mile more of moor succeeded, and then some patches of culti-

vated ground, amidst which were scattered eight or nine cottages of a very superior description to those usually met with in that part of the country. They were, in fact, all the property of one proprietor, a liberal and kind-hearted man, who took the repairs upon himself, and saw that they were always done in time and to perfection. No broken thatch, no unstopped wall, no door half off the hinges was there; but with a great deal for comfort, and a little for taste, each labourer of Mr. Graham possessed a home, certainly not superior to that which every industrious man through the land ought to be able to command, but very much superior to the hovels in which the peasantry of England are often to be

found. Neither were they huddled close together; each house possessed its own little garden and bit of potato ground, and was, moreover, separated, from its neighbour, in most cases, by a small field or two inclosed by hedge rows—rather rare in that part of the country. Connecting them all together, however, were several paths, well covered with gray sand, and one principal road, though it seemed to be a private one, adorned from place to place by finger-posts directing the traveller towards Allerdale House. Where this road crossed the highway from the town, the two labourers separated, the one turning to the right, the other to the left, each in search of his own cottage. It was by this time as dark as

pitch, with the rain falling, in heavy, but scattered drops, and the wind dashing it against every opposing object: a sort of night when the sight of a man's own door is very pleasant to him. It was so to Ben Halliday, and he laid his hand upon the latch with the certainty of comfort and repayment for all the day's labour in the smiles of a happy home.

We must take one glance at the interior of his dwelling before we leave him, as we may hereafter have to return to it when a few short months have passed. As soon as he opened the door, a cheerful blaze presented itself from a large grate, well filled with fire, for it was a country where coal was cheap, and the inferior kinds might be

had almost for taking. A good-sized pot hung above, heaving and sputtering with the broth for the evening meal, and Ben's wife, a country-woman of about four or five-and-thirty, who had once been an exceedingly pretty girl, and retained abundant traces of former beauty, was peeping into the black vessel to see that all was going on right within.

Ben and his wife had married early, and three children, of many, were still left to them; a stout, well-grown boy of about fifteen, known in history as young Ben; another boy of about eight, usually called little Charley, a rosy, curly-headed, cheerful urchin, full of fun and mischief; and a girl of about thirteen, very like her mother, who

was knitting blue-worsted stockings for her father at the moment he entered, while her elder brother was cutting out the soles for wooden shoes, and the urchin was teasing the familiar cat, till pussy put out her claws and took to the defensive. Round about were shelves, upholding various kinds of wares, well garnished in most instances, especially with neat white plates and dishes, and manifold wooden bowls and spoons. Every one started up, or turned round, to welcome home the father of the family. The girl laid down her knitting, the son put away his work, the wife gave him a kiss of welcome, and the urchin pulled his smock-frock, and said, "You are wet, daddy." But we must not pause any further upon

the cottager's welcome home, for we have other matter on hand, to which it is necessary now to turn.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE IDIOT AND THE TOURIST.

"HALLOO, halloo, halloo!" cried a voice about half a mile down in the moor, just as the two labourers were entering the little wood, "here, here! you are going wrong, straight on, straight on! — halloo! hoy! halloo!"

These words were not addressed to the two men on the road, though the tone was

loud enough, and the voice was strong enough, to be heard half over the moor. The figure from which this voice proceeded was not one which the eye could pass over without remark. It was that of a man perhaps of eight or nine-and-twenty years of age; but although plenty of time had been allowed him to grow, if he had been so disposed, yet he had never reached the altitude of five feet and an inch, and would have looked like a boy had not a head prematurely grey and a great width of frame shown that he had at least attained the period of manhood. In point of width, indeed, it seemed as if Nature, having curtailed him of his fair proportion in height, had endeavoured to make compen-

sation, like a bad architect, by running out the building to an enormous extent on either side. His limbs, too, were all powerful, though somewhat short; and the face was broad, like the person, with coarse, bad features, perhaps not altogether without expression, though generally vacant, and, when lighted up by a ray of intellect, showing naught that was good or pleasing. The eyes themselves—small, grey, keen, and uncertain—rendered the look always sinister. One of them must have squinted violently, but which of them it was could not easily be discovered, for it was alternately the right eye and the left that was nearest to the round and turned up nose. He was dressed, according to the old phraseology,

in hodden grey, with a pair of strong but light lacing boots upon his feet, which were small in proportion to his body, and of which he was wonderfully vain. On his head was a knitted cap very much like those worn, or rather carried, I should say, by the boys of the Blue-Coat School, and in front of this cap was stuck on all occasions a twig of heath, fresh when it was in blossom, withered when the season was passed. Such was Tommy Hicks, the Idiot of Brownswick, as he was usually called, and, as far as want of intellect to guide him aright was concerned, the appellation was correct. It is curious, however, to remark how Nature distinctly defines the difference between cunning and sense in such un-

fortunate beings as he of whom I speak. Very few of the wisest men in Brownswick could match Tommy Hicks in cunning; and it not unfrequently happened that, when brought before the magistrates for some of his offences, he would pose the whole bench by his wild but shrewd replies. His mother had left a small property at her death to be employed in his maintenance, so that Tommy Hicks could always get clothes and food at the cottage of an old man and woman at the bottom of the moor. But very often he would be out for days, weeks—nay, months—together, and in the course of his wanderings he had been the inmate of several workhouses and two gaols; for he did not at all deserve the

name often bestowed on persons of his peculiar degree of capacity, and Tommy Hicks was by no means an innocent.

The person to whom his shouts were addressed had reason to feel that such was the case, for, following incautiously the directions he received, he plunged up to his knees in a marshy piece of ground, and at another step would have had the swamp over his head, while Tommy Hicks stood looking on, with his hands in his pockets, enjoying the scene amazingly, but not suffering his satisfaction to display itself in anything beyond a grin which stretched his wide mouth from ear to ear, and showed all his white irregular teeth. The stranger was a tall man, a strong and a quick one,

and perceiving instantly the trick which had been played him, he drew back a step or two, walked quickly round the edge of the swamp to the spot where Tommy Hicks still stood, and, catching him by the collar, threatened to punish him on the spot for what he had done. For an instant the idiot struggled in his grasp with tremendous force, but he speedily found that his opponent was still stronger than himself, and ceasing his efforts, he said, in a sullen tone, "It is your own fault, master; I told you to go straight on, and you went too agee."

"You can lie, too — can you?" said the other; "come, march on, and show me the way, as you engaged to do, or I will thrash you heartily."

"You may not catch me quite so easily another time," said Tommy Hicks.

"Oh, I will catch you," answered the other, "or find you out afterwards. What's your name, my man?"

"Jack o'Lantern," answered Tommy Hicks, readily, and the stranger, laughing, gave him a push forward, saying,

"Well, get on, get on; it is coming on to rain, and you shall have the shilling I promised when we reach the house."

Tommy Hicks muttered something to himself, in which the only distinct word was "Shilling!" and then, being free from his companion's grasp, walked on at a stout pace, talking wildly to the wind and rain as they blew and beat against him, and

seeming to forget altogether the little quarrel that had taken place. It was not so, however. Tommy Hicks did not forget such things, and though his thoughts wandered, his purposes were generally fixed. Instead of taking his way direct towards the road above, the idiot sidled away in the direction of the wood, and when he had come within about fifty yards of it, at a spot where the ground was broken and irregular and the paths very difficult to be traced even in broad daylight, he darted away, with a shout of laughter, and, plunging into the wood, was lost in a moment to the eyes of the person who followed.

The stranger stood and gazed around him for a moment or two, murmuring,

"This is very pleasant. Well, it can't be helped; I have passed worse nights than this may be, let it rain as hard as it will, and though I may have no other bed than the moor. I will follow up the edge of the wood; I never yet saw a wood without a road through it;" and pursuing this sage determination, he turned his face to the wind and storm, breasting the slope nobly.

It needed a good deal of precaution to find his way along without stumbling, for the ground was rough and uneven, covered with tufts of heath and gorse, and wherever a broken bank gave the bramble an opportunity of hanging itself, there it was ready, with its long arms and sharp claws, to seize upon the traveller's leg, and scratch, if it

could not detain him. He was well loaded, too, for strapped upon his shoulders was a capacious knapsack, apparently completely filled, but nevertheless he strode on manfully, and at length reached the road along which the two labourers had walked some ten minutes before. Judging at once that his way could not lie to the right — not from any knowledge of the country, not from any dependence on the idiot's previous guiding, but from an habitual, or intuitive discernment of the bearings of places — he turned directly to the left, walked on a little way, and then to his joy and satisfaction beheld a light like a bright eye look out over the hedge-rows. Advancing further in search of a path leading to it, he

observed several more lights on both sides; but he was constant to his first love, and making his way onward, in about five minutes more he was knocking with his knuckles at Ben Halliday's door.

The loud "Come in!" was pronounced in the broad Cumberland accent, and, entering the cottage, the traveller saw the labourer and his family seated round an abundant bowl of very good potato-soup, with certain pieces of meat in it, to the whole of which an onion had lent a flavour by no means disagreeable to the nose of the hungry. Everything was cheerful, contented, and happy. The handsome and intelligent faces of the labourer and his wife, the clean and respectable look and orderly demeanour

of the children, all afforded assurance to their visitor that he had fallen into better hands than when he trusted himself to the guidance of an idiot, and he paused for a moment ere he spoke, gazing over the scene, where the assembled family stared at him in return.

" I beg your pardon," said the stranger, at length, addressing himself to Ben Halliday, who by this time had risen, " but I have lost my way upon this moor, and have got exceeding wet for my pains."

" Good Lord, then," exclaimed Ben, interrupting him, " it was you I heard shouting! Well, sir, I am very sorry I did not come down, but you see, my cousin Jacob vowed that it was the silly fellow

Tommy Hicks, and I never like to bring Jacob and Tommy together, for Jacob is always dire with the lad, and vows he will break his bones."

"I dare say it was the fool whom you heard," answered the visitor, "for the truth is, I was detained just at the foot of the moor by an accident that happened, and meeting with a fellow in a grey coat, I asked him if he could show me my way across, which he undertook to do, and led me into a marsh."

Ben Halliday laughed: "Well, he's a mischievous devil!" he said, "and as full of spite as a cat. I beg your pardon for laughing, sir; but no one in these parts would have trusted Tommy Hicks to guide

them. But pray come in to the fire, and dry yourself. Here's some broth, quite hot. Poor stuff enough, but it will warm you."

The stranger accepted frankly and willingly the hospitality offered, sat down by the fire-side, threw off his knapsack, took a porringer of soup and a lump of bread, and soon was quite at home in the cottage. He talked and laughed with Ben and his wife, he played with Charley, he even stroked the cat when she came purring round his legs. His frank and unceremonious bearing was strong recommendation to the worthy people within; and his appearance was also very prepossessing.

He was a man of perhaps six-and-twenty, and, as has been before said, was uncom-

monly powerfully, though lightly, made; one of those thin flanked, broad-chested men, who have more of the Apollo than the Hercules in their form. His features were straight and fine, with dark blue eyes and long black lashes and brows, dark brown hair and whiskers. His complexion, too, was fresh and ruddy, not with a rosy spot on either cheek, like a head upon a sign-post; but all in one general glow from health and exposure. His hands, however, looked fine and delicate; and his dress somewhat puzzled the cottagers at first; for it was of that sort which might have belonged to several classes. It was all of one material, except the shoes and the covering for his head, being of a black and white woollen

check, then not so commonly worn by gentlemen as now; and when he entered, he wore a plain Lowland bonnet, which might have suited a grazier or good Cheviot farmer perhaps better than himself, for a certain sort of harmony was wanting between the person and the dress, and it was this discrepancy which, as I have said, puzzled the family of Ben Halliday.

As the moments passed by, however, their doubts ceased. There was no mistaking the station of their guest after a quarter of an hour was gone. The southern tongue, the clear, distinct, and rapid articulation, the grace and ease of every movement, the unconscious dignity of carriage, even when playing with the boy, had as convincing an

effect as if he had given a long catalogue of honourable ancestors. During that quarter of an hour the visitor had said not one word of himself, whither he was going, whence he came, or what he sought; and with a delicacy not unfrequent in the cottages of mountaineers, the good peasant would not have asked a question for the world, as long as he saw his guest contented with his homely fare, and a seat at his fire-side. And he did seem contented; so much so, indeed, as to win greatly upon his hosts; for there is an implied compliment of a very kindly character in the cheerful and unaffected acceptance of what a poor man can do to entertain us, which is worth all the condescension in the world.

At length, however, the young gentleman rose with a sigh, as if he really felt regret at going, and said, "I must wend on my way, my good friends, with many thanks for your hospitality. I dare say it has done raining by this time; but as I cannot well go on to the place where I intended to sleep, so late at night, I will thank you much if you can direct me to some inn or public house where I can get a good clean bed."

The principle upon which a peasant scratches his head in a case of puzzle has often been a question of deep interest to me, but I have never been able to solve the problem. Whether it is that he seeks by a natural instinct to stimulate the organ of

cogitation, or whether it is that the unusual exercise of something within the skull makes its external teguments itch, or whether there is an irresistible inclination in man's nature to do something with the hands when the mind is busy, and that the first thing that presents itself to work upon is the head, I do not know, but certain it is that Ben Halliday was in a puzzle, and did scratch a spot a little above the left ear with a great deal of vigour and determination.

"Well now, sir," he said, at length, "if you had asked for anything else in the world I could have better told you were to find it than a public house. There is not a place where you would like to sleep, I think, nearer than Brownswick."

"Why, my good friend, that is just where I have come from," replied his visitor; "and I should not like to go back again over the moor to-night."

Ben Halliday was exceedingly disposed to be hospitable, and so was his wife, and they looked at each other for a moment or two, as if inquiring what could be done. But there are things in this world which are impossible, though I at one time thought there were not. Now, such a thing as a spare room is not to be expected in a labourer's cottage, and no such convenience was to be found in that of Ben Halliday. All the beds he possessed had their tenants, and therefore to lodge the stranger seemed quite out of the question. While he was

pondering upon the subject, however, the conversation and cogitation were suddenly interrupted by the door being flung open and his cousin Jacob presenting himself. The man gave a hasty glance round the cottage, and then inquired, "Have you seen anything of my boy, Bill? He has not come home yet, Ben, and he was out upon the moor."

Jacob Halliday's eyes had only rested casually on the stranger for a moment, but when Ben and his son had both replied that they had seen nothing of the boy, the young gentleman joined in the conversation, demanding, in a grave tone, "What is he like, my good friend?"

"Why, sir, he is a boy of about twelve

years old," replied Jacob Halliday. "He has got on a short jacket and leggins."

"Has he black curly hair?" asked the stranger.

"Yes, sir—have you seen him?" demanded Jacob, eagerly.

"Yes, I think I have," answered the young gentleman; "he was down at the bottom of the moor when I was coming up from Brownswick. — Now, do not alarm yourself, my good man, for he will do very well, and there is no danger, but he has met with a little accident, if it be the lad I mean."

Jacob Halliday, a man of a warm and excitable disposition and quick imagination, sank down into a wooden chair by the

table, and, with his hands resting on his knees, sat gazing in the stranger's face.

"I assure you he will do very well," said the stranger, who felt for his anxiety; "I had him attended to by a surgeon immediately, who assured me there was not the least danger—it was that which detained me so late," he continued, turning towards Ben Halliday, "and the people to whose cottage I carried him promised to send somebody up to let his father know."

"Will you have the goodness to let me hear all about it, sir?" said Jacob, with as much calmness as he could assume.

"Certainly," replied the young gentleman. "I have been taking a tour on foot through this part of Cumberland, and I set

out about three o'clock from Brownswick, to walk up to the house of a gentleman on the other side of the moor, but just as I had come out of a village—I don't know its name——"

"Ay, it is Allenchurch," said Ben Halliday.

"And had gone about half a mile upon the moor, just where the path crosses a little stream, I saw a nice-looking boy lying on his back on the bank."

"Ah, my poor lad!" cried Jacob.

"As he seemed in some pain," continued the gentleman, "I stopped to ask what was the matter, and he told me that as he was crossing the little wooden bridge a part of it broke down, under his feet, and he fell

forward, catching his leg against the broken part. He had contrived to scramble to the bank, he said, but he could not stand; and after examining his leg, I thought it better to take him up in my arms, and carry him to a cottage which I had seen not far off. I found an old man and woman there of the name of Grimly, who kindly took him in, and put him to bed. I sent the old man off to Brownswick for a surgeon, and waited till he had come and set the leg. He assured me that there was no danger, and that he would soon be well; and making the people promise to let you know, I came on myself, for by that time the sun was going down."

"And so the poor boy's leg is broke," cried Jacob Halliday, starting up. "I will

bet a crown that that devil, Tommy Hicks, is at the bottom of it—breaking down the bridge or something. I will break his bones for him, that I will."

"Nonsense, nonsense, Jacob!" cried Ben, as the other moved towards the door; "don't you go to do the poor lad a mischief, for you don't know what. Go and see your boy, and how he is going on; but if you find Tommy there, have nothing to say to him till you find you have got reason."

"And I will go up and tell Margaret," said Mistress Halliday, "and stay with her till you come back."

"Thank you, thank you, Bella," said Jacob; "but you had better tell her I

shall rest down there, most likely; for I won't leave Bill alone in that devil's den, and I will bring him up to-morrow, if I can find an easy cart."

"I dare say Mr. Graham will lend you his spring-van," replied Ben Halliday. "I'll go up early to-morrow, and ask him."

"Do, do, Ben," answered his cousin, "and send down young Ben to let me know."

Thus saying, he quitted the cottage, and was closing the door without uttering a word of thanks to the stranger; but suddenly his heart smote him for ingratitude, and putting his head in again, he said—

"I forgot to thank you, sir, for all your kindness to my poor boy; but it is not for

want of feeling it, I can promise you, and I hope I shall be able to speak it out some other time."

"Oh, never mind—never mind!" answered the young gentleman; "I require no thanks, my good friend. God speed you, and give your son a quick recovery."

As soon as the door had closed on Jacob Halliday, and while Ben's wife was putting on her worst straw-bonnet and thickest cloak to go out upon her charitable errand, the young gentleman turned to Ben, saying—

"You mentioned Mr. Graham's name just now. Pray is that Mr. Anthony Graham, the banker, of Brownswick?"

"Yes, sir," answered Ben; "Jacob and

I are two of his men; and a better master or kinder man doesn't live."

"Pray, is his house far from here?" demanded the visitor. "I found a letter from him at Brownswick, inviting me to stay with him for a few days; and it was there I was going when the idiot led me into all the swamps he could find."

"It isn't much above a half-a-mile," answered Ben; "why, we are upon his ground now, sir, and I am sure he will be very glad to see you. Lord, if you had told me that before, it would have saved us all that thinking about public-houses! Mr. Graham would never have forgiven me if I had let you go to an inn, even if there had been one to go to, when you

were invited to his house up there. He has a great sight of company with him, come to shoot, and all that; and if they expect you, sir, I should not wonder if they were waiting for you before they take their dinner; for they dine when we sup."

"I cannot well present myself in such a wet and muddy condition," said Ben's visitor, in a musing tone.

Ben looked at his knapsack, which lay on the floor near the fire, as if he thought that it must contain wherewithal to improve his guest's outward appearance; but the other divining instantly what he meant, replied to the glance—

"No, that will not do. There is no-

thing in it but some geological specimens, and the linen I have used since I came from Keswick. I sent up my portmanteau from Brownswick. If you will allow me, I will stay half an hour longer here till I am sure they are gone to dinner, and then ask your boy to show me the way."

"I will go myself, sir," answered Ben Halliday; and while his wife went up to console Jacob's helpmate under the misfortune which had happened to her son, the good man remained to entertain his guest.

The sons and the daughter amused themselves quietly apart, and the conversation between the cottager and the gentleman took a more serious turn than it had pre-

viously assumed, running upon the state of the peasantry in that part of the country, their wants and wishes, their notions and their feelings. The stranger questioned with apparent interest, and Ben Halliday answered with frank straightforwardness. His replies were not brilliant enough to admit of transcription, though there was a good deal of plain sense in them; but the stranger found, not a little to his surprise, that without any vehement discontent or political fanaticism, even Ben Halliday himself was a good deal prepossessed in favour of "The People's Charter." The good man assured him that the same feelings were very general throughout all that part of the country; and he

seemed so calm and reasonable, that his guest applied himself to prove to him that what was sought could not be granted with safety to the institutions of the country, and, if granted, would only prove detrimental to the very classes who demanded it. He pressed him close with various arguments, and Ben answered briefly, from time to time, but at length the labourer paused for a moment or two thoughtfully, and then replied:

"I dare say it is very true, sir, what you say; and I never pretend that the charter is the best thing that could be invented; but of one thing I am very certain, that gentlemen must either allow us a hand in making the laws which govern

us, or make laws to protect us against oppression. It is all very well saying, as I have heard some say, that labour must find its own market like anything else, and that it is but a commodity that is bought and sold, and such like; but there's a difference between it and other commodities; for it must eat and drink, and will eat and drink; and the market is not a fair one, for everything is done by law for the buyer, and nothing for the seller; and all the while, in the nature of things, the commodity wont keep, so that the buyer gets it at what price he likes. I don't understand much of these things, sir, although I have heard some of the lecturer people hold forth about them; but one

thing I do know, which is, that hunger is a hard task-master, and that rich men can use him, if they like, to drive poor men to anything. It is a sort of power they have beyond the law, and if those who govern the country—parliaments, or ministers, or whatever they may be — do not take care that masters, and farmers, and landlords, and such like, do not abuse that power, they may some time or another find out that patience and suffering will not last for ever. I should be very sorry to see that day, for I know well that the poor would, in the end, do no good to themselves, and a great deal of harm to the rich; and amongst the rich, whether they be manufacturing gentlemen or land-

lords, or what not, there are a great many as good men as ever lived—such as my master here, and I am sure I would fight for his property to the last drop of my blood; but I can see very well that there is a sort of bitter discontent spreading fast amongst us labourers, and growing blacker and blacker, just like a cloud coming over the sky, which will end in a storm. It used not to be so long ago, but the new poor-law has done a great deal to make the change, for that first showed the people clearly that the rich were ready enough to take care of their own money, while they refused to do anything to better the labourer's condition, or to make his master deal fairly by him."

The guest listened attentively, and then mused; but whether he saw that argument would have no effect, or believed that there might be some truth in the cottager's views, he did not answer, and at length, taking out his watch, he said,

"Now, I think I will go, my good friend, for it is half-past seven, and, in all probability, they will be at dinner before I reach the house."

## CHAPTER III.

### THE COUNTRY BANKER.

EVERY man should build his own house, if he can afford to pamper his peculiarities; for the mind, which has been compared to many things, is, in fact, like a fragment of rock fallen off from the crag, full of knobs, and angles, and odd corners, of all sorts of shapes and sizes, and there are many hundred millions of chances to one that—

in all the multitude of sheaths or cases which are daily constructed for bodies and souls on this earth — you will not get one which will fit exactly any particular specimen of mind which has been reft from the great rock. Man must have corners for his oddities, and nobody can make them for him but himself.

Now, Mr. Graham had built his own house some ten or fifteen years before the period of which I write, and a very comfortable house it was, large, roomy, well arranged, not what is called magnificent, because Mr. Graham had on certain subjects a great fund of good sense, and having become wealthy (after having been by no means so) in consequence of the increasing

prosperity in manufactures of the town of Brownswick, in which his was the only bank, he had a strong notion that anything like ostentation would make people remember, rather than forget, that he had not always been as rich as he now was. He was a man of a very active and cultivated mind, and of a disposition both liberal and enterprising; he loved to do good to all around him, to see happy faces, and to know there were happy hearts. He had been industrious himself, and he loved to encourage industry. His principal object in buying a large tract of what had been considered waste land, and in bringing it into cultivation, was to give employment to the peasantry of a poor district; and in

dealing with them he did not so much consider at what rate he could get their labour as what wages he could properly afford to give. He did not at all wish to do any injury to the neighbouring farmers or gentlemen, by giving higher wages than it was fair to give. That was not at all his object, and, throwing such considerations entirely out of the question, he only asked himself, what was fair. The plan succeeded wonderfully: first, in making one half of his neighbours hate him mortally; secondly, in making all the poor people love him warmly; thirdly, in gaining for him all the best labourers in the county; and, fourthly, in rendering the estate exceedingly productive at the very time when

every market-day heard prognostications of his never getting a penny of return.

But this was only one of many successful speculations. He was always ready to enter into anything which held out even a tolerable prospect. He lent money to one manufacturer, who could not get on without; he took a share in a mill which was likely to be stopped for want of funds; he bought up a great quantity of produce which was to be sold at a period of depression. If a contract was offered, he was ready to take it on the most favourable terms, and in all he was successful. The manufacturer to whom he had lent money prospered; the mill went on; the period of depression passed away, and prices rose;

the contract proved a good one. Some attributed all this to Mr. Graham's luck, some to a keen foresight to coming events, some to the possession of great wealth, which enabled him to hold on while others were obliged to sell. There was, perhaps, a little of all in the business, and great luck he certainly had, for his least hopeful speculations were often more successful than the most promising. However, so it was, Mr. Graham was a very prosperous man.

The situation which he had chosen for his house turned out a good one, though people at first thought it would be bad. The moorland lying to the north-west was separated from his grounds, or park, as the

people called them, by several masses of wood, large and small, to which he added young plantations, arranged with great taste. In front of the house, while it was building, stretched out sloping to the southward, some two hundred acres of open ground, rather unpleasantly soft to the foot, with more rushes and moss than were altogether beautiful or agreeable; while at the bottom of this marshy tract was a thick mass of tall old trees, some oaks, but more frequently pines, which cut off entirely the view of the lake. But Mr. Graham set to work, ploughed and harrowed the whole of the open space, drained it upon a plan of his own, gave it a greater inclination away from the house, cropped it, cleansed it

thoroughly, and then laid it down in grass. By the time the house was inhabitable, for it occupied nearly four years in building and fitting up, Mr. Graham had as fine a lawn as ever was seen. He then attacked the wood, and cut his way clear through, till there was not a window on that side which had not a peep of the lake. He did nothing rashly, however. The oaks in general were spared, and he so arranged it, that when the winter wind tore off the brown leaves from the deciduous tree, a tall old pine or fir appeared through the stripped branches. Neither did he anywhere afford a view of the whole lake or of either end, it was too small for that. The cutting was so arranged, and the trees left

standing were in such a position, that from one window you got a view of one part of the sheet of water and the hills behind, and from another of a different portion, without ever seeing beginning or end. There was a mystery about the extent which is always pleasant. The lines of land and water lost themselves among the trees; and imagination might go on prolonging them for ever if she liked, behind the woody screen, in whatever way suited her best at the moment. In summer it was, indeed, a beautiful scene, with the green slope and the dark broken wood, and the catches of the sunshiny lake, with tall, bare, misty mountains rising blue behind. Often, too, to give greater magic to the scene, a white-

sailed boat would skim across the face of the waters, be lost behind some of the masses of trees, and then reappear again, till hidden at length entirely behind the part of the old wood which had been left standing.

A little stream, too, which, flowing down in former times from the moor, had lost itself in the savannah before the house, and in rainy weather had turned it into a swamp, now collected in a fixed bed with one or two other small brooks, was led along till it reached the top of a rocky bank some twelve or fourteen feet high, and was there left to leap over at its own discretion, forming a cascade within sight, produced indeed by art in which no art was apparent. No-

body who had not seen the place before, ever fancied that the stream had had another bed.

In all these things, as I have before said, Mr. Graham had been very successful. In one point in life, however, he had not been so, and it was an important one. Whenever a man suffers himself to be led in pursuit of an object not consonant to his general views and disposition, he is sure to get into a scrape. Mr. Graham was not naturally an ambitious man, but some four-and-twenty years before, when he was nearly forty, he had done a little bit of ambition. In the straitened circumstances of his early days he had remained single, but as prosperity visited him, and wealth increased, he

began to sigh for domestic happiness. He was an enterprising man, as I have said; and he married a lady without knowing very much of her character. All he did know was, that she was handsome, about thirty years of age, the daughter of a baronet, whose father had been lord-mayor of London, and whose sister had married a poor peer. It was not a hopeful concatenation for a country banker, Mr. Graham. Nevertheless, something might be said in your defence. One might suppose that the civic origin of the family dignity, the three turtle-shells rampant in the arms, might keep down aristocratic pride. Such, however, was not the case.

Mrs. Graham's father had spent a great

deal of what her grandfather had made; and yet, young, single, and handsome, she had seen no reason why she should not marry a peer as well as her aunt. Peers thought otherwise, however, and did not marry her; considering a little, perhaps, that she had but five thousand pounds for her portion, when her aunt had had fifty. At twenty-six, she began to imagine that a baronet or an honourable would do; but they did not come. At thirty, her father was dead, her brother ruined, some grey hairs were mingling with the black, and she married a rich country banker. But her temper was by this time soured, and her pride not a whit quelled. She fancied she was condescending to Mr. Graham—

nay, more, that she was lowering herself. She felt a degree of spite at herself and him for what she had done, and her only consolation was, that he was rich enough to enable her to domineer over all the families in the neighbourhood.

Now Mr. Graham did not approve of her consolation at all. He did not consider himself honoured in the least degree; he did not think his wealth or her assumed station gave her any right to treat his friends on any terms but those of equality. He was not weak enough to yield upon such a subject while there was a hope of a change; and during the two first years of their union he reasoned, remonstrated, even reproved, but all in vain; and when their

first and second child were born dead, Mrs. Graham informed him that it was his ill-temper which had caused the misfortune. There are many ladies who love their faults far better than anything else, and would not part with them for the world; and, in general, although a husband may consider it his duty to get rid of them as fast as possible, yet he will generally suffer his wife to keep them, if she does but adhere to them with a certain degree of pertinacity. This very incorrigibleness secures them. The maxim embodied in the words "Anything for a quiet life," has done more harm in domestic matters than any other saw that was ever propounded. A man marries for a cheerful and happy home, if he does not

marry solely for love; and when he finds that the object is only to be obtained, even in part, on the condition of tolerating his wife's faults, he is sure to yield to them in the end. So did Mr. Graham. He contented himself with doing the best he could to make every one forget his fine lady's petulant haughtiness by his own urbanity; but it cannot be said that he was very successful. People rarely forgive that which mortifies their pride, and thus, through a great part of the neighbouring society, Mrs. Graham was disliked for her bad qualities and Mr. Graham for his good. He had one consolation, however,—he was universally loved by the poor, and he felt it.

But one living child tended to soften the discomfort of Mr. Graham's home, and she

was a comfort indeed. She had her mother's beauty; but many of the finer qualities of her father, and she clung to him with fond and eager attachment. Her mother was fond of her, too, because she was like herself in person; but she often wished that her daughter was not so poor spirited, and would not in ball or assembly, go over and talk to those girls, the ——s, who dressed so badly, and were little taken notice of by any body.

It is time, however, to go into Mr. Graham's house and see the interior, and we shall beg the reader to walk at once into the dining-room, on the same cold, windy, autumnal night to which the two preceding chapters have been devoted.

It was a large, handsome room, beauti-

fully proportioned, with walls decorated with pilasters, between which hung some fine pictures by both modern and ancient artists. All the ornamental parts were very quiet, chaste, and in good taste, and the draperies which now hung over the windows, though rich in themselves, had not the least bit of gold upon them. A large bronze lamp hung from the ceiling in the centre of the room, with the glasses so shaded that the light fell less upon the faces of the guests than upon the table, round which some sixteen persons were congregated. The plate which decorated the board was somewhat ancient in form, and though there was plenty of it, yet there was no great display. It might have been heavier,

more rich in design, more ornamental, but everything that could be wanted was there, and Mr. Graham thought the plainer it was the better.

The dinner, indeed, was somewhat more ostentatious, but that was Mrs. Graham's affair; and though it was not vulgar from its profusion—for she had a French cook who would not tolerate such a thing—it was a great deal too refined for a number of her husband's guests. Mrs. Graham did not care about that, however; it suited her own guests, and be it remarked that she made a great distinction between her own and her husband's. Those whom she thus specially appropriated to herself consisted of four persons whom she had se-

duced dow into Cumberland: a Lady Jane Somebody, with long flaxen ringlets, a very beautiful and most delicate complexion, light blue eyes, and a rather over-wide mouth; her brother, the Honourable Captain Something, with light moustache and wristbands that turned back over the cuffs of his coat. He thought himself like Charles I., and looked melancholy. Indeed, poor man, he was very much bored. Then there was a post-captain in the navy named Hales—at least, so I will name him — distantly related to one or two noble families, and hanging on upon several others. It was long since he had seen any service, was very quiet and insignificant, fond of shooting and fishing, played well

at billiards and piquet, liked good dinners and frequented country houses where they grew. He was, moreover, a tall, well-dressed, good-looking man, who made himself useful as well as ornamental. The fourth was a baronet, a member of Parliament, a sucking politician, aspiring to office for the honour rather than the profit of the thing, for he was wealthy; but he had a vehement conceit in his own powers, wearied the House with large-worded speeches, and not very apposite quotations in Greek and Latin, for he had lately come from Oxford, and had visited the Ionian Islands; and he was considered a very rising young man, simply because he treated the opinion of everybody with

contempt who did not exactly agree with the opinions which he formed himself, or which he was instructed to maintain.

To this gentleman, Sir Arthur Green, Mrs. Graham was particularly attentive and gracious; and, indeed, she had reasons of her own for being so, though he did not know them. In person, he was exceedingly diminutive, except about the hips; which had been intended by Nature for a bigger man, and fitted on him by mistake, and his face, which approached in some degree that of our great prototype, the ape, was alternately moved by a quick and irritable expression when he was speaking himself— as if he thought people were not paying sufficient attention to his notions — and

quiescent when others were talking, with a fixed look of cold contempt for the notions of everybody.

The rest of the party consisted of neighbouring gentlemen, most of whom lived at twelve or fourteen miles distance, and therefore slept the night where they dined, and of a family who inhabited one of the houses by the lake near. But they were nobodies, and consequently turned over to Mr. Graham for entertainment and courtesy. Nor did they lack it, Miss Graham perversely aiding her father to the best of her power, although Mrs. Graham had purposely placed her next to the baronet, in order to admire and be admired. But Margaret Graham would not admire Sir Arthur Green

at all. She thought him very ugly, very conceited, and very stupid. She knew nothing about the corn laws, less about the Irish question, and as little of the tariff. But she did not at all approve of the baronet's turning away with a sort of inattentive nonchalance when her father had made some very just and practical observations upon the latter subject, and pursuing his own conversation, as if he either did not hear what Mr. Graham said, or thought it quite unworthy of notice. That was not the way to the daughter's heart; but Mrs. Graham rather admired it.

The second course was nearly concluded, and a great part of the usual subjects of a dinner-table had been exhausted. The

country gentlemen had done all they could on the topics of pheasants, hares, grouse, and partridges. It had been declared that not one woodcock had yet been seen in the country; which those who wished for an early winter pronounced a bad sign, and those who desired a late one, a good sign. The markets and the weather had been discussed. Some of the ladies had enjoyed a little bit of scandal, delicately administered by Captain Hales, and it was over. The sucking politician's oratory began to fail. The Honourable Captain Somebody amused himself with an orange-wood toothpick, and looked as if he were about to be led to the block. His sister sat in patient insipidity; and Mrs. Graham herself was beginning to

find things rather long, when a servant whispered something to Mr. Graham, who looked pleased, and said—

"Very well, see that he has everything to make him comfortable. — My dear, Mr. Fairfax has come, and will join us as soon as he has changed his dress."

The name was aristocratic; and Mrs. Graham vouchsafed a smile, inquiring —

"What Fairfax, Mr. Graham?"

"The eldest son of John Fairfax, who was member for Coventry, and nephew of Sir Edward Fairfax," replied her husband, with an inclination to smile; "his father was an old acquaintance of mine, and had many good points, though some very strange ones."

The conversation about Fairfaxes then

became general. Everybody knew a Fairfax or something about a Fairfax; and it was just over, and the second course removed, when the dining-room door opened, and Mr. Fairfax was announced. While he came forward and was greeted warmly by Mr. Graham as the son of an old friend, all eyes but those of Sir Arthur Green were turned upon him, and everybody made their comments internally. Sir Arthur did not think anybody worth looking at, and endeavoured to hold Mrs. Graham's attention, by asking if she took any interest in the tobacco question? to which Mrs. Graham replied, with a sweet smile, "Yes, very," and continued to gaze at the new visitor.

He was remarkably handsome—that was

the first thing apparent; he was remarkably well-dressed—that was the next observation made; he had all the ease, grace, and self-possession, of a man of high station—that was the closing remark: and Mrs. Graham determined that he should be one of her set.

The introduction to his wife and daughter over, Mr. Graham asked if Mr. Fairfax had dined. He replied that he had, at a cottage hard by, where he had taken shelter from the rain; and, seated opposite to Margaret Graham, he gave an account of his adventures of the evening, lightly, gaily, but mingling touches of kindly feeling, and good sense, with merry comments on his own wisdom in putting himself under the guidance of an idiot, in a manner which

amused and pleased both father and daughter, while Mrs. Graham declared it was delightful, and the whole party seemed to feel that a new spring of life and pleasure had burst forth in the midst of them, to stir the waters that had been inclined to stagnate. The dessert was the most cheerful part of the meal, and the ladies remained longer than Captain Hales, who was fond of claret, thought considerate. Sir Arthur Green hated Mr. Fairfax, for now nobody paid any more attention to him than he was accustomed to pay to anybody.

When the whole party assembled in the drawing-room, after that temporary separation which foreigners so much cry out upon, music and cards succeeded; but

Mr. Fairfax would have nothing to do with the latter, and kept a position near the piano, especially while Margaret Graham was singing.

Her voice had not been much cultivated, but it was exceedingly sweet, and feeling and taste did more for the expression of her singing than all the teaching in the world could have effected. Mr. Fairfax seemed delighted, and talked to her a great deal about music, and from music they rambled on to painting, and from painting to poetry, so that they might have gone through the whole circle of the arts, had not Mrs. Graham called the young gentleman to the other side of the room to look at some beautiful engravings which were

laid upon a table. Such, at least, was Mrs. Graham's pretext; for to say truth, she cared not a straw whether Mr. Fairfax looked at the engravings or not. Certainly society is a strange thing, and the devil must have had some hand in its construction; for we are told that he is the father of lies, and the whole fabric is filled with his offspring. In reality and truth, Mrs. Graham had for the last half-hour been observing her daughter and Mr. Fairfax. His handsome person, his high-toned air and manner, and his very gentlemanly appearance, seriously alarmed Mrs. Graham for the success of her scheme for marrying Margaret to Sir Arthur Green. She saw Margaret's eyes sparkle with a much

brighter look than usual, and her cheek grow warmer with excitement, as she listened to a sort of conversation that she had never heard before, and Mrs. Graham reckoned that such a man as Mr. Fairfax would prove a very dangerous rival to the monkey-faced, consequential little being, upon whom she had cast the eyes of affection. Wisely—very wisely—she did not make up her mind to do anything that might check Mr. Fairfax's growing admiration for her daughter; for she thought, judging by what her husband had said of his family, that he himself might be no bad match for Margaret, failing Sir Arthur Green, and, in the meantime, the stimulus of rivalry might prove a sort of hothouse,

and bring the baronet's passion rapidly into full bloom. She determined, however, in the first place, to make herself quite sure, from Mr. Fairfax's own mouth, of various little particulars in his situation which her husband had left doubtful. Her first address to him, therefore, after she had given a reasonable time for the inspection of the engravings, was to the following effect, and delivered with a smile and a look of interest:

"Do you know, Mr. Fairfax, I think I must have been very well acquainted in former years with some of your relations? You are eldest son, Mr. Graham said, of Mr. John Fairfax, who was member for Coventry."

"The same, my dear madam," answered the young gentleman, gravely, and still looking at the engraving of the "Assumption of the Blessed Virgin."

"Well, then, I must have known your uncle," continued the lady, "at the house of my uncle, Lord Twinkleton. Was he not Sir Edward Fairfax at that time—a colonel in the army, I think?"

"No, he is not in the army," replied Mr. Fairfax, looking up; "he is now an admiral, but has only been so two or three years."

"Ah! I must have made a mistake," said Mrs. Graham; "I knew he was either in the army or navy. How is Lady Fairfax?"

"Don't frighten me, my dear madam," said her young guest, laughing; "if there is a Lady Fairfax in my family, she must have become so within the last ten days, and the very idea of my uncle marrying is tantamount to a charge of lunacy, which you know is a disagreeable circumstance in a man's race. You forget how time flies, dear lady; he is now seventy-three, and though the best and kindest man in the world, is eaten up with gout."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Graham, apparently in great surprise; "then was he never married?"

"Never," replied Mr. Fairfax, "that I know of; and I think, as I am his adopted son, and have been brought up entirely by

him almost from my birth, now five-and-twenty years ago, I must have heard of it if such had been the case."

"How strange that I should make such a mistake!" exclaimed Mrs. Graham.

She was now quite satisfied. Nephew, heir, and adopted son of an old and highly-respectable baronet, Mr. Fairfax was quite the sort of man whom she liked; and she determined from that moment to let him take his chance against Sir Arthur Green, without favour to either party, although, if there was a bias, it was to have her daughter called Lady Fairfax rather than Lady Green. Besides, he was such a handsome, distinguished-looking man too, and that was no slight matter in Mrs. Graham's opinion.

About five or ten minutes after, Mrs. Graham slipped out of the room, and made her way to the library, where she studied "Burke's Peerage and Baronetage" for a short time. When she returned, her face became quite radiant to see Mr. Fairfax seated beside Margaret again, while Lady Jane Something played a fantasia on the piano, and Sir Arthur Green, with the air of a connoisseur, turned over the music in the wrong places. It was evident to Mrs. Graham's eyes that Margaret was well pleased with her companion's conversation. She had never seen her so carried away, as it were, by the presence of any one, and when she approached near enough to hear what was passing, she easily compre-

hended the cause of the continual variation of expression which took place in her daughter's countenance; the look of half-puzzled thought changing suddenly to that of bright intelligence, then sobering down to gravity, almost sadness, and that again vanishing away in a gay smile or a light laugh. But in truth Allan Fairfax's conversation was very peculiar. It went bounding along like a roe from subject to subject, and figure to figure, finding latent resemblances in the heart of apparently dissimilar things, suddenly setting everything in a new point of view, the most joyful in the darkest and gloomiest aspect, and extracting a smile even from a tragedy. So rapid was the transition, that it was

difficult for the mind to follow him; and yet, like a playful child running away from pursuit, he paused every now and then in his gay sport, in order to give the followers time to come up.

Thus passed the first evening of his visit to Mr. Graham's house, and Allan Fairfax retired to his chamber to think rather than to rest.

He sat down and leaned his cheek upon his hand; the gay, lively, sparkling young man was suddenly converted into the grave and thoughtful one; and though he could not be called exactly sad, yet a shade of melancholy came over his face, and he sighed heavily more than once.

" She is very lovely," he said to himself,

at length—"she is very lovely, and I must take care. Mine is a hard fate." And with that conclusion he ended.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE LOVERS' EXPEDITION.

WERE the organ of cautiousness projected till it became almost a horn, and had it all the power of communicating prudent impulses to the conduct of man which some persons attribute to it, still I fear it would be found all-insufficient to keep youth out of temptation. Two, three, four days passed by, and Allan Fairfax was still at

Mr. Graham's house. It was shooting one day, hunting another, sauntering a third; and though Mr. Graham himself was obliged to be absent long on each morning upon the various matters of business in which he was engaged, still he pressed his guests to amuse themselves during his absence, and Mrs. Graham was enchanted to make them as comfortable as possible, inasmuch as they were, after the first day, all of her own particular set; and in that number Mr. Fairfax was now marked out by particular favour. To the greater part of the guests, too, his society was apparently very agreeable. The Honourable Captain Somebody liked him very much, and declared that he rode better than any man he had ever seen

out of the —— troop of the —— regiment; Lady Jane thought him, silently, extremely handsome; Captain Hales was, of course, very friendly and civil, though Fairfax shot a great deal better than himself; and Margaret Graham said nothing, but smiled when he approached at first, and then became somewhat thoughtful.

Thoughtful or smiling, however, he was a great deal with her, and as it so fell out, often alone; for Mrs. Graham's health was by no means good, and Margaret did the honours of her father's house during a great part of the time he was absent each day. She showed Mr. Fairfax the grounds, which were extensive, pointed out to him with pleasure and pride all the changes and im-

provements Mr. Graham had made, and was well pleased to have an auditor who would fully appreciate the taste which her beloved parent had displayed. The only discontented person was Sir Arthur Green, whose consequence vanished from the moment of Mr. Fairfax's appearance, and who, coldly rude before, was inclined to be warmly rude after his arrival. People paid very little attention to him, however, and he did not venture to go too far. A new life seemed, as I have said, to enter the house with Allan Fairfax. Nobody looked bored any more. There was always something to be seen, something to be done, some amusement, or at least some occupation. Margaret and he and Lady Jane

visited the cottages of Ben Halliday and his cousin, inquired after the boy who had been hurt, and talked kindly with the labourers' wives. They called on the clergyman of the parish, and heard all his details of parochial matters, and Margaret listened with pleasure to the contrast which Mr. Fairfax drew between the state of happiness and prosperity which spread around Mr. Graham's dwelling and some other parts of the country which he had lately visited; but a rather unpleasant discussion followed at dinner that day, suggested by some observations made by Fairfax regarding the condition of the lower classes in England. Sir Arthur Green was an ultra-political economist, and,

like all fanatics, made a high science ridiculous or hateful by bringing it to bear upon subjects not immediately submitted to it. He looked upon all men but as machines; he spoke of them as such, was inclined to treat them as such. They were, in his opinion, but parts of the great universal manufactory, flesh and blood engines, whose business it was to produce as much as possible at the least imaginable expense. Fairfax reminded him of a slight difference between them and all other machines; that they felt, that they thought, that they loved, that they hated, that they had hearts as well as arms, an immortal spirit as well as a reasoning brain, that the motive power was one he could not supply, and dared not take away.

Nevertheless, the sucking politician went on, assuming much as incontrovertibly proved, which everybody in the room was inclined to deny, and covering his cold theories with clouds of schoolboy aphorisms, till in the end he declared that he not only thought it extremely foolish, but unjust to the majority, for any man to give one penny more in wages than the very lowest possible sum at which he could obtain the labour required.

"Everything has its market price," he said, "and those who pay more for anything, raise the price upon others unjustly."

It was a direct attack upon Mr. Graham's system, but that gentleman did not think

fit to notice it further than by replying, with a laugh,

"If we could kill and eat our peasantry, Sir Arthur, when there are too many of them, as we do our oxen, I believe your plan might succeed, but as the law and our own consciences would not let us do that even if we could, I am afraid the scale of wages must be framed upon other principles. The possessors of property and the employers of labour must pay at least a sufficiency for the support of those dependent on them either in wages, or poor's-rates, or pillage. I like the former mode of payment best—but to change the subject, I have to propose an expedition for to-morrow, which Margaret shall lead, as I

must be in Brownswick all day. What think you of a ride over to Brugh, and the Marsh, as we call it? although, be it remarked, there is not an inch of marsh, properly so called, in the whole tract. None of you, I think, have seen it, and it is a very interesting district."

The marked and decided turn given to an unpleasant conversation cut it short, of course, and all parties agreed that the proposed expedition would be very delightful. Lady Jane, who, Heaven knows how, found, or fancied herself related to the well-known Ann, Countess of Pembroke, to whom Brugh Castle once belonged, besought that it might be included in the ride, and would not be deterred by Mr. Graham's hint that

the distance would be very great. She was an indefatigable horsewoman, she said, and she was sure that Margaret would not be tired; the day, too, was certain to be fine; they were just getting the Indian summer, as it was called; November had become as warm as May; and, in short, she was resolved that Brugh Castle should be visited. It is wonderful how pertinacious those fair-haired, wide-mouthed, fine-complexioned girls can be when they like it. Everybody yielded, of course; and it was arranged that the time of departure should be an hour earlier than had been proposed at first.

Oh, the ever eager heart of youth, how it bounds forth upon the course of enjoyment! Well may they call hope a flame

and love a fire, for they both consume that which nourishes them, leaving the smoke of disappointment and the ashes of regret. Allan Fairfax lay down that night with a bosom full of bright expectations for the morrow. There was sunshine within, but as when a man gazes over a prospect lighted up by the bright morning rays, he shades his eyes from the orb whence those lustrous beams proceed, while the sight revels in the loveliness they display, so Fairfax, while he looked forward to the coming day with the thrill of anticipated enjoyment, would not let his mind rest upon her from whom all that sunshine flowed. Little had he thought when, on visiting the small town of Brownswick, to receive an inconsiderable

sum of money for the further expenses of his tour, and found a letter of invitation to Mr. Graham's house, that the result of his visit would be the feelings he now experienced—little did he think it, or he would never have come, sweet and charming as those feelings were; but now they were upon him, he gave himself up to their influence, not without doubt, and fear, and hesitation, but with the spell of new-born love too strong for mastery.

There was another heart, too, within that house which beat high at the thought of the coming day, but with less fear at the sensations which it itself experienced, though with some timidity. Margaret saw that she was loved, and she felt that, for the

first time, she was loved by one whose passion she could return. It made her thrill when she thought of it, but yet it was very sweet, and no anxiety mingled with the feeling, for she knew that her father's whole hopes were in her happiness, and she saw that her mother was well-inclined to smile upon her love.

Every one was awake by daybreak, and every one looked out of the window to see the aspect of the sky. It was grey and shrouded, a light frost lay upon the ground. To Margaret's eyes it looked unpromising; for fear will come thrusting herself before hope, at the first obstacle in the course of enjoyment. Still she put on her riding-habit, and looking bright enough herself to

give sunshine to a wintry day, she went down to the breakfast-room, where she found her father and Allan Fairfax. She caught Mr. Graham's eye fixed upon her while she shook hands with the latter, and she thought she saw a slight but well-pleased smile upon his lips. The colour mounted warmly into her cheek, and, turning to the window, she looked out, saying, in a faltering voice—

"I am afraid it will be a bad day."

"Oh no, my dear," replied Mr. Graham, "the sky will clear within an hour, and you will have a beautiful morning for your ride. I will not say as much for to-morrow, and even doubt what we shall have to-night, but we may reckon upon eight or ten hours safely."

It was as Mr. Graham said. Before breakfast was over, the grey mist that overspread the sky first broke away into thin clouds, and then disappeared entirely, as if the sun drank them up as he rose to run his race. Mr. Graham mounted Allan Fairfax on a powerful horse, which was accustomed to keep pace with that of his daughter; he lent a good bony hunter to Captain Hales, and the rest of the party had their horses with them. A servant followed, and all seven set out a little before ten, while Mr. Graham got into his phaeton, and drove away to Brownswick.

Proceeding slowly at first along the road towards Brugh, Margaret Graham and the rest of the party soon issued forth upon the

banks of the little lake, and skirting round the western side with the reflection of themselves and their horses clear on the surface of the unrippled waters, wound away towards the opposite hills, where the road they were following rose over a narrow neck between two high saddle-shaped mountains, and then descended rapidly to a plain several thousand feet below. From the highest point reached by the road the view was wild and sublime in the extreme — sublime from its immensity. As far as the eye could see, was one vast expanse, unbroken, almost interminable; for the faint boundary which separated it from the distant sky was obscured by a mist so slight, that it blended heaven and earth imper-

ceptibly together. To the right, indeed, faint and far off, could be traced, after long-gazing, several waving lines, like those of clouds, but probably some of the hills of Niddesdale; and on the left were the grand Cumberland mountains, which further on appeared crowned by Skiddaw. I have said that it was uninterrupted, but that wide plain was not unvaried, for although the general hue was in the nearest parts of a bright deep green, and in the distance an intense blue, yet lines of different colours, all profound in their degree, checkered the expanse without injuring the harmony. Here and there was a wide extent of what seemed low wood; beyond, a yellow gleam crossed the plain, then came some undu-

lations almost black, either from the nature of the soil or from a shadow cast by clouds, which the spectator's eye could not discover in the clear sky above. Nature herself relieved the view from monotony, and at the same time marked the vastness of the whole by the variety of colouring. Underneath—almost at the feet of the party who gazed from the hill, were several flocks of sheep and herds of oxen; and others could be distinguished further off, lessening in the distance till they became faint specks, and disappeared.

"There is the Brugh Marsh," said Margaret Graham, in a low, sweet voice, as if almost awed by the grandeur of the scene: "and there lay the camp of Edward I.,

when the fierce and invincible bowed to a stronger and more permanent conqueror than himself."

"It seems badly cultivated," said Sir Arthur Green. "I wonder no efforts have been made to render it more productive."

Margaret gently shook her horse's bridle, and began to descend the hill. In the infinitely modified varieties of human vanity, the most unpleasant to the individual and to those who are brought in contact with him, is *irritable* conceit. The vain man who is not satisfied that all the world thinks as well of him as he thinks of himself, is a wretched creature. Pride, though an isolated passion, is at all events independent: vanity is dependent upon

others' opinion for its satisfaction, if not for its support. Sir Arthur Green fancied himself proud, but he was only vain; and a conviction which had been growing upon him that he was by no means particularly pleasing in Margaret's eyes, made him determine to revenge himself by paying all his attentions to Lady Jane. He could not have devised a means of making himself more agreeable to Margaret, and while he thought he was inflicting punishment by attaching himself to the lady of rank, and neglecting altogether the banker's daughter, Margaret Graham was cantering gaily on over Brugh Marsh by the side of Allan Fairfax, enjoying with him all that was beautiful in nature, and when that failed them, finding

stores of happiness like hidden treasures in their own hearts. The two captains rode together, and talked fashionable nonsense to each other with long intervals; and thus harmoniously paired, they crossed the wide plain towards a spot upon its verge, where, from the heights above, they had seen some small black mounds which constituted the little town of Brugh, and the remains of its old castle. But distances seen from a height are very deceptive to the eye. Every one but Margaret thought they would reach the ruin in an hour; but though they rode fast, hour after hour went by, and it was half-past two before they had stabled their horses at the small inn, to let them feed, and were climbing the slope toward the castle. Fair-

fax offered Margaret his arm to aid her in the ascent, and she took it, as she saw that Lady Jane had made no scruple of accepting such assistance from Sir Arthur Green; but the baronet was evidently—nay, ostentatiously making love, and Allan Fairfax and his fair companion were not. Perhaps there was no need. The other two, however, separated themselves from the rest of the party almost as soon as they reached the old walls. Lady Jane was not at all sorry to have something to amuse her; for Brugh was not enough now she had got there; and therefore she laughed and talked, and showed her fine teeth, and gave the young politician every sort of encouragement to go on both with his soft nothings

and his hard facts, without the slightest intention of ever going one step beyond a little innocent flirtation. For some five minutes the other two gentlemen remained with Margaret and her companion; but every one knows how easy it is to break into knots in a ruin, and while Fairfax and Miss Graham were standing in the heart of the great square tower, and gazing up, they found themselves left alone together.

It was a moment of great temptation. Should he tell her, he asked himself, how he loved her, how her beauty, and her grace, and her gentleness had carried him away without power of resistance, and everything in life seemed valueless but her? But no, he would not do it; there was a

chain around him which held him back from such happiness as the hope of possessing her. It might be broken, indeed, and her hand might break it, but to do so she must see it, and know it, and the first thing was to tell her all.

"This is very grand," he said, somewhat abruptly; "but do you know, I never see a ruin without its leaving for a long time a melancholy impression."

"I think that is the natural effect," replied Margaret; "or if not melancholy, the impression on my mind is always grave and tending to thought. A ruin is in itself a monument to decay, to that which must be undergone, not only by all, but by the works of all."

"Yes," replied Fairfax, "such things as these we see around us are the mementoes of the inevitable fate—the skull and cross-bones to the world's undertakings. But I fear, dear Miss Graham, that the melancholy I feel is more from an individual than a general application of the figure. The sight of a ruin is to me a memorial of my own fate—"

Margaret started with a look of surprise and distress.

"Yes," continued Allan Fairfax, "whenever I see buildings gone to decay, especially where the dilapidation has been effected more by neglect or violence than the natural process of time, I begin, whether I will or not, seeking out similarities between its fate

and mine. I see an image of the ruin of bright prospects, and in its hopeless, irreparable desolation, a picture of my future fate."

The tears were in Margaret's eyes when he ended, but gazing down upon the ground, she answered, in a low, sweet voice—

"I have seen many ruins repaired, and made more beautiful than ever. May it not be so with you?"

"You shall judge," answered Fairfax. "I will tell you the whole story, which, though a very strange one, is very short."

"Oh, do," cried Margaret; "it will interest me deeply, I am sure."

"I was born to wealth," said Allan Fairfax, "and I now have nothing—abso-

lutely nothing. Dependent upon the goodness of a kind and excellent old man, so long as he lives I have affluence, but from the hour of his death, with the exception of my commission, I have nothing."

"Ha, ha, ha!" cried a voice, apparently close to them, "and I have got nothing, either—jolly, jolly nothing," and the squat broad figure and sinister countenance of the idiot, Tommy Hicks, appeared from under the archway of the little door on the west side of the tower.

Allan Fairfax turned upon him angrily. "Get you gone, you mischievous fool," he exclaimed, shaking his horsewhip at him; "if I catch you near me, I will teach you not to mislead a traveller whom you undertake to guide."

The idiot leered at him fearfully. "You had better not touch me," he said; "Tommy can spite them that spite him. You shall have good measure in return, Master Stick-inthemud. I wish you had been laid in the bog all night. You would have had a soft bed of it, and might have made the moon your warming-pan, for those sheets are rather damp, I reckon."

Fairfax took a step towards him, but at the same moment Tommy scampered off through the doorway, and Margaret laid her hand upon her lover's arm, saying, "Oh, do not hurt him! The poor creature is quite insane, and does not know what he says or does."

"I only wish to frighten him away,"

replied Fairfax, "for I would fain end my tale now I have begun it."

Barely two minutes elapsed, however, before Captain Hales rejoined them, saying, "Come here, come here; there is such a beautiful view from the top of the wall where a dumpy fellow in a grey jacket has guided Lady Jane and Sir Arthur, that they want every one else to see it."

Margaret and Fairfax followed, and although the sweet girl's face was somewhat melancholy when Captain Hales interrupted their conference, yet as they walked along a step behind him over the grass-grown courts and fragments of broken wall, a smile, bright, warm, and meaning, passed over her face, and she said to her companion,

in a low tone, "Yet I think even this ruin might be repaired."

"It is in a sad state of dilapidation," said Fairfax, gloomily; but the next instant turning the angle of the great square tower, they came in sight of a high and almost detached piece of the outer wall, on the summit of which stood Lady Jane and Sir Arthur Green, while on the steps up to it, formed by the broken stones of the building, appeared the idiot, with his arms crossed upon his breast, gazing far out over the waste. At the foot of the wall were some large masses of fallen stone, with a plentiful crop of nettles amongst them, and the Honourable Captain Somebody was busily engaged with laudible philanthropy

in cutting down with his horsewhip the pungent enemies of urchins' fingers.

"Is that a very safe situation, Lady Jane?" demanded Fairfax, when he reached the bottom of the wall, and remarked the many stones which had been loosened by time, and the apertures left by others which had been taken out to build cottages in the neighbourhood.

"I don't know, Mr. Fairfax," cried the lady, apparently alarmed at his question. "Do you think it is likely to give way? I should like to get down, Sir Arthur—pray help me down."

"Get out of the way, Mister Grey-jacket," said Sir Arthur Green, giving his hand to Lady Jane, and addressing

the idiot, who stood right in the midst of the descent; "I want to pass, my man."

"Well, you may pass, if you can, my minikin pin," said Tommy Hicks, still keeping his arms stoutly crossed upon his chest; "it is a nice airy situation, and you had better stay there till you are bleached, for your mother wove her cloth terrible yellow."

"Get out of the way, you scoundrel, or I will knock you down," cried the little baronet, in a great rage, letting go the hand of Lady Jane, who began to scream, and advancing upon the idiot. But Tommy Hicks, with a movement as quick as lightning, and a loud laugh, gave him a push on the shoulder, which instantly

overthrew his balance and cast him down from the wall just above the nettles which were still undergoing decapitation. The height must have been fourteen feet, and in all probability the little baronet would not have come to the ground safe in life and limb, had he not luckily fallen right upon Lady Jane's brother, who gave way beneath the shock, and both rolled in the bed of nettles together.

Alarmed for the situation of Lady Jane, left alone with the idiot on the top of the wall, Fairfax paused not to look or laugh at a scene which was certainly more comic than tragic, but sprang up at once over the piles of rubbish, which brought his head within a foot or two of the top of

the wall. He was stretching out his hand to seize the idiot by the heel, when, with one of his wild halloes, Tommy Hicks sprang off on the other side, and, mounting the wall, Fairfax aided Lady Jane to descend. As he did so, his eye caught the form of Tommy Hicks, scampering off towards the marsh, apparently unhurt, for, though the depth was somewhat greater on that side, the turf was soft and even. Lady Jane was strongly inclined to faint when she reached the bottom of the descent, but the sight presented by her brother and Sir Arthur Green, who by this time were standing face to face, with both their noses streaming with blood, and strongly inclined to quarrel, touched some

ticklish point in her imagination, and, instead of fainting, she burst into a fit of laughter. Captain Hales interposed to calm the two wounded and irritable gentlemen, and the whole party, after a short pause, adjourned to the little inn, to get such luncheon as it could afford before they set out upon their way homeward.

Ere the luncheon was over and the horses saddled, the ill-closed windows of the inn began to rattle with a rising gale, and the sky grew dark and ominous. Then came the mounting in haste, and scampering off, if possible, to outride the storm. But the distance was great, the hour half-past three; night fell while they were still far from their journey's end,

and, long ere they reached the foot of the hills, the rain was drifting hard against them, mingled with sharp particles of very fine hail.

The whole party were drenched before they reached the house of Mr. Graham; and gladly did they see the door open and the lights within. Servants hurried to take the horses; but Allan Fairfax thought that he remarked a somewhat different aspect in the men, and as the party separated in haste, each hurrying to his room to change his wet garments, he heard Margaret inquire of her maid, who had come down to meet her—

"Whose gig is that standing near the door?"

"It is old Dr. Kenmore's, Miss Graham," replied the maid; "but you had better come and change your clothes at once, ma'am, for you are terribly wet."

Allan Fairfax had got some way through his toilet, when, after an introductory tap at the door, the butler entered, with a face exceedingly grave.

"Mrs. Graham has told me to give her compliments to you, sir, and the other gentlemen and ladies," he said, "and to beg you will excuse her and Miss Graham for not appearing at dinner, as Mr. Graham has been taken very ill immediately after his return from Brownswick."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Fairfax, in a tone of unfeigned grief; "what is the matter—do you know?"

"A fit of apoplexy, the doctor says, sir," replied the butler; "but he is a little better since they bled him and poured the water upon his head; and he looks about him a little, though he does not speak. Mrs. Graham told me to say also, sir, that she hoped to have the pleasure of seeing you to-morrow, at breakfast."

That evening passed sadly: all the guests preparing to take their departure early on the following morning, although the report of Mr. Graham's health, when they separated for the night, was that he was a good deal better, and all immediate danger over. Most of those present were willing enough to fly from a sick man's house; but Allan Fairfax would fain have

lingered, had he been permitted, to comfort and support poor Margaret. That, however, was out of the question; and when he at length lay down to rest, it was with a sad and anxious heart, in which all the bright, warm expectations of pleasure which had visited him on the preceding night, had been extinguished, like one of those fireworks which give out for a few minutes a thousand intense and brilliant colours, and then end in an instant in smoke and darkness.

## CHAPTER V.

### A LADY'S MUTATIONS.

MR. GRAHAM had passed a tolerable night: heavy fits of sleep had fallen upon him from time to time, which alarmed his daughter greatly, for she did not distinguish—indeed, how could she?—between natural though very profound slumber, and the state of stupor in which she had first seen him after her return. However, the

old surgeon, who, having got a diploma from some college or another had dubbed himself doctor, watched by his patient throughout the livelong night, marking every turn with the most scrupulous care. Indeed, he was a very skilful man, as the old school of surgery went, and besides that, Dr. Kenmore had an advantage over any surgeon that could have been sent for in the case of Mr. Graham. He was his old personal friend, and he loved him dearly. Circumstances had changed with Mr. Graham since first the doctor knew him, but no alteration had taken place in their demeanour to each other. It was always "Kenmore" and "Graham" with them. The latter had fine houses,

broad lands, great wealth, important speculations, wore frock coats and trousers, and drove a phaeton; the other remained in a blue coat with brass buttons, a white waistcoat, and black breeches and silk stockings, and drove the same buggy, though the horse had been changed more than once; for he, too, had a thriving practice, and was well to do in the world. But Mr. Graham was not at all ashamed of his old companion, though the style of his dress dated thirty years before, and his manners were frank even to abruptness. Their heads had grown white together, and Kenmore was dear to Graham, but not more dear than Graham to Kenmore. Now if it had been a brother, or

a father, or a child, the good doctor could not have been more anxious than while, sitting by the side of his patient's bed, he watched him by the shaded light, and, ever and anon turned his eyes to Margaret, who, till three o'clock, was the companion of his guard.

"There, don't cry, my dear," he said, in a low voice, once, when he saw the tears in her eyes; "you'll make me more nervous than I am; if it were not that I saw you sitting wiping your eyes there, I should have devilish little anxiety at all, for I tell you it is a very good case, and we shall get him quite safely through. I wish you would go to bed, with all my heart; you are of no manner of good, I can tell you; so if you

are flattering yourself that you are doing service, you are very much mistaken."

In the meantime, Mrs. Graham had long retired to rest; not that she did not love her husband as much as she could love anything—for she had gradually acquired a certain sort of affection for him, and indeed it was hardly possible for her to be without it,—but she did not see what good she could do; her own delicate health was a fair pretext; and after asking Dr Kenmore if she could be of use, and having been bluntly told, "quite the contrary," she went to bed, and slept. She had reasons for sleeping well. She was very well contented with everything that had happened for the last week except Mr. Graham's illness.

She was well contented that her daughter should not be Lady Green—it was such a vulgar name, Green. Any one could discover in a moment that Lady Green must be at the best a baronet's wife—she might be a knight's. But Lady Fairfax: that was a different matter; it had an old, rebellious, aristocratical sound about it which she liked. Then again, Sir Arthur looked like a monkey new breeched—a chimpanzee baronet—a representative ape; she began to think him odious when compared with Allan Fairfax; she fancied that all his disagreeable qualities had made themselves apparent during the last six or seven days, and she went to sleep murmuring, "Lady Fairfax."

A sad mortification awaited Mrs. Graham, however. On the following morning, when the maid opened the curtains, her first question was, of course, for her husband. The woman informed her that he had fallen into a nice quiet sleep, and the doctor, who had lain down on the sofa, said that he was to be disturbed on no account. Mrs. Graham then asked for her letters, which she usually read in bed. Two were then given her, the first of which she read without any emotion, for it was only from a dear friend. The second, however, caused great agitation in Mrs. Graham's whole frame; but it is as well to let the reader see a part of the contents.

"I can tell you all about him, my dear

Mrs. Graham," said Lady Adeliza Newsmonger; "we are all profoundly interested in him, and many a heart is breaking for him. He is a lieutenant in the —— regiment, and brought up by his old uncle the admiral, who would leave him all he has, if he could, poor man; but the estates are all strictly entailed, and go with the title, you know, to the son of William Fairfax, of Ichstead—a poor, humpbacked young man, who married Maria Graves. But the most interesting and curious part of the whole history is, how he came to be brought up by his uncle instead of by his own father. John Fairfax, his father, was a very rising sort of man, and made a great deal of money in a short time in India. When he came

back, he went into parliament, and married a Miss Allen—I don't know who she was, but I think Dulwich College belonged to her father. There was not a cleverer man in the House than John Fairfax, and he plagued the ministers terribly; but one day, when he was out hunting, just about the time this boy was born, his horse threw him, and he lighted on his head. At first he was thought to be dead, but he got better in a sort of way, though never altogether; for a most unaccountable notion took possession of him, that this boy was a changeling, that his own son had died while he was ill, and that they had put another in the place, not to vex him. He could never get it out of his head till the last day

of his life, would not own him, and only left him fifty pounds a year, because he said it was not the lad's fault. That is the way he came to be educated by his uncle. Is it not very shocking and interesting?—all the property went to this young man's next brother, and is entailed upon the rest of them. There were four others before poor Mrs. Fairfax died, which was from grief, they say. But I must tell you of the ball at ——"

Mrs. Graham did not read anything about the ball. She laid down the letter on the bed; she put her hand to her head; she had almost burst into tears. But instead of doing so, she thought it better to ring her bell for the maid who had gone

to fetch the cup of chocolate with which she usually began the day, and to dress herself immediately.

The maid waited to carry up the chocolate, however; and when she appeared in her mistress's chamber, she had two notes upon the salver—one very neat and lady-like, and one somewhat clerk-like, both taking leave and condoling; the one from Lady Jane, the other from Sir Arthur Green.

"Are they gone?" demanded Mrs. Graham, eagerly.

"Yes, ma'am," replied the maid, "they both went about five minutes ago; and the captain and Mr. Fairfax are only waiting for the chaise from Brownswick."

"Pray give my compliments to Mr. Fairfax," said Mrs. Graham, "and say that I beg he will not go till I have the pleasure of speaking with him for a moment."

It was uttered in the sweetest possible tone, and the maid thought her mistress intended to be very gracious to Mr. Fairfax, for even maids can be mistaken in their mistresses. When, however, Mrs. Graham, after keeping her young guest waiting for about half-an-hour, till she was in some degree dressed, appeared in the library, where the maid had found him, it was very evident to Fairfax himself, that the lady was not in the most placable humour. Her manner was cold and distant, and taking her own chair with a haughty air, she

pointed to another, saying, "Pray be seated, Mr. Fairfax. I have a word or two to say to you before you go."

Fairfax looked a little confounded, but he replied, "I was about, my dear madam, to write you a few words to express how much grieved I am at Mr. Graham's illness, and how much I sympathize with yourself and Miss Graham under this severe affliction."

"We really do not require sympathy, Mr. Fairfax," replied the lady; "and as you mention Miss Graham, that is exactly the point to which what I have to say tends. Allow me to observe, that I find to my sorrow and regret you have mistakenly been led into paying much greater attentions to

my daughter than I was previously aware of. To prevent, then, anything like disappointment, I think it but fair and just to inform you that we have very different views for her; and I cannot but hint it may be as well for an acquaintance to cease which I trust has not gone far enough to produce disagreeable results to any party."

Allan Fairfax was certainly very much astonished. The change in Mrs. Graham's whole demeanour was so marked and painful, so sudden, to him so unaccountable, that for an instant his thoughts became confused by the hasty effort of the mind to run over every circumstance in the past for the purpose of finding some solution to the enigma. It was necessary, however, to

answer, and he replied with a degree of causticity which he would have avoided if he had had more time for reflection. "It is strange, my dear madam, that after having reached five-and-twenty, I should find anything to surprise a reasonable man in life. Nevertheless, your words, your changed manner, your whole demeanour, do so much surprise me, that I must inquire if Miss Graham has in any way complained, or ever thought, that I have paid her attentions disagreeable to her?"

Mrs. Graham would not tell a direct lie in answer to a straightforward question, and she herself was not quite so calm as she might have been, so that she answered, "No, sir, she has not; but I have eyes and

cars, and others have the same, and I really do not see what should surprise any young gentleman in your peculiar position, that the mother of a young lady, heiress to a large fortune, should object to attentions which can result in no good, and even prohibit intercourse which may produce evil."

"It would not, madam," replied Fairfax, "if it had not been preceded by direct encouragement. We should not feel the absence of light if we had always dwelt in night. But I now begin to gain a little insight into the matter from an expression, perhaps inadvertently used. My '*peculiar position*' has, I suppose, been explained to you rather lately, whether by an idiot, who

has most likely perverted the tale in telling, or not, you best know; but allow me to say, that my position, whatever it may be, was fully known to Mr. Graham; and before I say anything further on the principal point in question, I shall wait till he is well enough, as I trust he soon will be, to express his opinions."

"His opinions are, I beg to say, the same as my own," answered Mrs. Graham, with a very angry brow. But this is all trifling. Lady Adeliza will be flattered by the appellation of idiot; and you may depend upon it, Mr. Graham will never feel disposed to oppose my views regarding my own daughter. In the meantime, as you force me to speak plainly, Mr. Fairfax, I must decline the honour of your visits

altogether. I trust you may find a wealthy wife elsewhere. It must not be here."

The sting of the last words was felt to the marrow. To be thought—even to be called a fortune-hunter, was more than he could bear; and feeling that if he replied at all, his words would be intemperate, he made Mrs. Graham a cold and formal bow, and hurried into the passage, at the door of which the chaise was standing in waiting for himself and Captain Hales. The latter kept him for two or three minutes after he had entered the vehicle, but then jumped in; and with a sad glance towards the half-closed windows of Mr. Graham's room, Allan Fairfax was borne away from that house, never to set foot in it again while it remained in possession of the same family.

# Part the Second.

## THE DAYS OF ADVERSITY.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE BRITISH LABOURER'S REWARD.

Two years and a half had passed, and time had swallowed up many things most precious: hope, happiness, enjoyment, energy had fled from many, leaving disappointment, sorrow, and the apathy of despair. Spring was now in the place of autumn; but it had been hitherto a cold and dreary spring, with rain and sharp winds and occasional snow;

and the moor looked even more brown and desolate than at the close of the year. The winter had exhausted all its wrath upon it, and there seemed no prospect of revival; not a green blade of grass was to be seen springing up amongst the moss and heath, not a young rosy bud upon the bare branches of the trees—the very energies of nature seemed extinguished. Like the season was the fate of one of those persons to whom the reader was first introduced in this tale. Poor Ben Halliday trudged back over the moor, with bent head and frowning brow. His cheek was thin and pale, his eye hollow and dim; his clothes, once so neat and trim, though plain and suited to his station, were now worn, soiled, and in some parts ragged.

But it was not to the neat cottage, with its pleasant little garden, where we have formerly seen him, that Ben Halliday now took his way. He passed through the little wood, indeed; he went beyond the turning which led to the spot where he had passed so many pleasant days; he gazed towards it with a sad and sinking heart; and a murmur rose to his lips, but did not find utterance; "I ought not to grumble," he said—"I ought not to grumble. Those who should be better off are as bad as I am. God help us all! I wonder what will become of us in the end. We poor people have no business in the world, I can't help thinking. At all events, others seem to think so." And he walked on.

The next moment, coming up the road which led from the cottage to that which had been his cousin Jacob's, he saw a figure moving through the trees apparently heavy loaded, and yet it was not the figure of a labouring man. It was evening, but not dark; and as the person who approached was seen and lost every second or two, in passing along the hedge-row, there was that undefinable something in the air and walk which distinguishes the gentleman, totally independent of the clothing, which, in this case, could not be seen. But Halliday, however, passed by the end of the road before the other pedestrian reached it, and in the sort of despairing mood of the moment, he did not even turn his head to see who it

was that approached. As he was walking on, however, a clear, mellow voice sounded on his ear, exclaiming, " Stop, my good fellow! Here! I want to speak to you!" And looking down the lane, he saw, at about twenty yards distance, a tall, handsome, well-dressed young man, carrying a heavy portmanteau by one of the handles.

" I'm looking for somebody," said the stranger, " to carry this thing for me a couple of miles; if you will do it, my good man, I will give you a half-crown for your pains."

" I'd carry it ten for that sum," said Ben Halliday, with his face brightening. " That will keep my poor girl in broth for a week."

"Good Heaven!" exclaimed the stranger, "why surely you are my old acquaintance, Ben Halliday! Do you not remember Mr. Fairfax?"

"Oh yes, sir, I remember you well enough," answered the labourer, mournfully; "but times are sadly changed with us down here; and I did not know whether you might remember me. I hardly remember myself as I was then."

"I know there have been sad reverses," answered Allan Fairfax; "but I did not think they had affected you, my poor fellow. I found your cottage shut up, and could not tell what to make of it; so I was going on to the village, where there is a public-house, I hear."

"Ay, sir, and a bad place it is, too," answered Ben Halliday; "not fit for such as you; if there is anything valuable in your trunk, I would advise you not to go there."

"I am afraid I must," answered his young companion, "for I do not wish to go back to Brownswick just at present."

"You know, sir, I dare say, all about Mr. Graham," said Ben, looking in Fairfax's face, and taking up the portmanteau at the same time.

"I do," answered Fairfax, gravely; "and it has been a sad welcome back to my own country, Halliday, to hear all this. We wont talk any more about it just now. Where do you live now, my good fellow?"

"Oh, just up at the village, sir," an-

swered Halliday, "about half-a-mile on this side the public-house. So, by your leave, I'll just stop for a minute and tell my poor wife that I am going on with your portmantle. It will be glad news to her to hear that I have earned half-a-crown by a light job like this."

"Are you not in work, then, Halliday?" asked Allan Fairfax. "I should have thought a good fellow like you would have always got employment."

"Oh, yes, sir, I got work enough," answered the labourer; "but people don't pay as Mr. Graham did, and they can do with us just what they like, for there are too many of us."

Allan Fairfax did not ask any further ques-

tion, but walked on with his companion, sometimes speaking a few words to him, sometimes in silence; for to say the truth, the young gentleman seemed somewhat moody and strange, sometimes smiling gaily at what was passing in his own thoughts, occasionally plunged into a fit of deep and gloomy meditation. At length a village spire came in sight, and immediately afterwards a group of cottages appeared at the corner of the road. They were all wretched in the extreme, mere hovels—ay, and hovels out of repair. The winter wind was kept from rushing through the broken windows by patches of paper and bundles of rags. The doors let in the rain, and the thatch protected not what it seemed to cover; the plaster was broken from the

mud wall in a thousand places, and hung in loose tatters, bagging and bellying out all over each miserable tenement. At the doors of some were seen squalid and dirty children, but half-clothed even with their rags; and at another, a gaunt pig was grubbing with its snout amongst a pile of rubbish. At the entrance of one of the poorest, stopped Ben Halliday; and after gazing at it sternly for a moment, he set down the portmanteau, and looked full in Allan Fairfax's face, saying, in a low tone, "It is here I live now, sir."

If he had spoke for an hour, he could not have made a sadder comment on his changed condition; but when he added, "I will just go and tell my wife," Fairfax answered, "No, Ben, I will come in with you."

"Oh, don't, sir," replied the labourer, "it will hurt you to see."

"It will grieve, but do me good," said Mr. Fairfax, in a firm tone. "I am an old friend, you know, Halliday. Take in the portmanteau, my good fellow."

Ben Halliday did as he was directed, and, walking slowly forward, opened the door. There was no joy to welcome him; a faint smile, indeed, lighted the features of his wife as she saw him come in; but she was busy tending her daughter, who sat in a wooden chair on the other side of a hearth nearly vacant of fire, though the thin white ashes that strewed it showed that wood had been burning there not long before. The daughter's face was pale and emaciated, with a red spot in the centre of the cheek,

and limbs apparently so powerless that she did not even try to approach her father. The eldest and the youngest boy were both absent, and Fairfax afterwards found that the one was employed at low wages in a manufactory some fifty miles distant, the other gathering sticks in the neighbouring woods and fields. Poverty in the most abject form was evident amidst the once cheerful, laborious family, and the tattered shawl which Mrs. Halliday drew across her chest, when she saw a stranger follow her husband into the cottage, served to show rather than to hide the want of even necessary clothing.

To Fairfax, however, as soon as she recognised him, she was still the frank, civil countrywoman whom he had before seen,

and no word of complaint passed her lips. Patient endurance was in all her words and looks, and that one virtue—she had many beside—had been of more value to her husband than a thousand showy qualities could have been. Had she displayed all she suffered, had she made the worst of everything instead of the best, had she complained and murmured, Ben Halliday would have given way long before; but she had supported, and strengthened, and cheered him, and though she could not lessen the evils which surrounded them, or hide from him the griefs still in store, she enabled him to bear them with fortitude, if not without repining.

Ben Halliday kissed her as tenderly as

ever; but one of his first thoughts was for his daughter, to whose side he advanced as soon as he entered, asking, "Well, Lucy, how are you to-night, dear?"

"I am better, father," said the girl, in a husky tone, broken by a cough; "I shall be quite well when the summer comes, and I can get out to help you and mother."

"She is very bad, sir," said Mrs. Halliday, speaking to Fairfax in the plain and unreserved manner (which some people might think unfeeling) that is common amongst the peasantry; "she's in a decline, poor thing."

"I am sorry to see her so unwell," replied Fairfax; "but I think a little good nourishment might do her good.—Here, Halliday,"

he continued, taking out his purse; "I do not like the account you give me of the public-house; so I think I shall rest myself here for an hour or two, if you will let me, and then go down to Brownswick again for the night. Run up to the village, my good man, and bring me down something for supper. We'll all sup together to-night. There's a sovereign; bring down plenty of things—eggs and some beer, and probably you can get a pound of tea, and some milk and butter.—I dare say you would like some nice tea or milk, Susan, would not you?"

"Oh, that I would," cried the poor girl, eagerly; "I'm sure tea and milk would do me a great deal of good."

"I'll run up myself, sir," said Mrs.

Halliday; "Ben is not good at marketing. I'll borrow a basket, and go in a minute."

Fairfax gave her the sovereign, adding, in a low voice, "Bring anything you think will do her good, Mrs. Halliday."

But Ben heard him, and said, "God bless you, sir!" with a tear in his eye.

Mrs. Halliday was hardly out of the door, when their cousin Jacob entered, gaunt as a wolf, with his coal-black hair floating wild and tangled about his haggard face.

"Well, Ben," he said at once, "have you been to old Stumps? I saw you come back—did you go?"

"Yes, I went, Jacob," replied Halliday, with a sigh; "but it is no good. I told him I and Bella and the two children could

not live upon seven shillings a week do what we would, and he said he could not help it. If we did not like it, we might leave, for he would give no more. He said, too, that many a man is glad to get it (which is true enough), so why should he give more to me?"

"Hell seize him!" cried Jacob Halliday, vehemently. "Who first brought down the wages here? But what did you answer, Ben?"

"I said that I must see if I could not get some help from the parish," replied his cousin; "but then he got very high and mighty, and said that I should not have one penny of outdoor relief; that I was an able-bodied labourer at full wages, and in employ;

and it was contrary to the rules of the New Law. He made me a little angry, he did; and so I said, then I must come into the Union, for it was earthly impossible for a man and his wife, and two children unable to earn a penny, to live upon seven shillings a week and pay a shilling a week rent. But that would not do either; for he answered with a sort of laugh, 'You may come in if you like, but I'll answer for it you'll soon be out again, Master Ben. We take care to make it uncomfortable enough, in order to keep all lazy fellows out, and the first thing we'll do with you is to part you and your wife and children.' He knew he had me there, Jacob; and he is one of the guardians, you know."

"Ay, I know," answered Jacob Halliday, with a bitter curse; "they've given the sheep to be taken care of by the wolf in their New Law, that's what they've done; but they may find sheep, even, sometimes turn wolves, too, and that overdriven oxen will toss. But I've something to tell you, Ben, that may mend matters with you a bit, though 'tis a bad way of mending them, too."

"What's that?" asked his cousin, eagerly; "it must be bad, indeed, that I would not snap at."

"I would not at this if it were twice as much," said Jacob; "but, however, every man to his own thinking. You know old Grimly, who had the care of Tommy Hicks,

is going into the Union-house on account of his bad leg, and as his wife is dead, there is no one to take charge of the idiot; so Mr. Golightly, who has the paying of the money weekly, came up to me to ask if I and my wife would do it. It's five shillings a week, and he's often absent wandering about for days at a time; but Mr. Golightly wants to keep him as far away from Brownswick as he can, for he's troublesome. I told him that if I were to take it, I should for certain break his neck before a week were over, but that you were a quieter sort of man, and might like it."

The proposal threw Halliday into a fit of deep thought. "Like it, I don't," he answered—"like it, I don't; but five shillings

a week—that's a good sum. Where could I put him?"

"Why, there's that shed place at the back," said Jacob Halliday; "if you could get some timber, it would be easy made into a tidier room than he's ever had at Grimly's. I'll lend you a hand at nights, Ben, and they say the boy is quieter a bit now—dogged, but not so spiteful. Then he has got his own bed and clothes."

"But the timber," said Ben Halliday, "how am I to buy timber? Why, it would cost fifteen shillings, what with boards and nails."

"Do not let that stand in the way, Halliday," said Fairfax, who had been talking to the sick girl. "I'm poor enough,

Heaven knows; but you shall have the timber, my good fellow, for old acquaintance sake."

The poor man was very grateful; and though he made some scruple, yet the temptation of the five shillings a week was too great to be resisted by his poverty, and it was agreed that he was to go down to Brownswick on the following evening and close with Mr. Golightly's proposal.

About an hour passed before Mrs. Halliday returned, and when she came back, Jacob had gone; but her husband at once told what had been offered, and his determination to accept it. The worthy woman was evidently ill at ease under the idea of having the idiot an inmate of her

dwelling, even poor as they were; but the thought of the money affording some relief to her husband, reconciled her to it at last, and with quick and busy hands she prepared the meal which the bounty of Fairfax had supplied. The little boy, Charley, had by this time returned with a load of dry wood, and a degree of cheerfulness spread through the desolate cottage which it had never before known. The tea seemed to warm and revive the poor sick girl, and Ben Halliday himself felt comforted, less by the food, perhaps, than by the knowledge that there was still one on earth who showed him kindness and sympathy.

Fairfax himself ate and drank to en-

courage the others to do so; but still it was little that he took, and indeed he seemed thoughtful and uneasy. Sometimes he talked a good deal to the cottagers, told them he had been in India since last he saw them, and amused the little boy by a tale of a tiger hunt, and showed him some scars upon his hand where the beast had torn him in its last agony. He reverted, unwillingly it appeared, to his former visit to Mr. Graham's house at Allerdale, and the very mention of the family threw him instantly into a deep reverie. At length, towards nine o'clock, he rose, saying, "Now, Ben, I will walk back to Brownswick. I will leave my portmanteau here for the night, merely taking out what I want, and will send up for it to-morrow."

Ben Halliday offered to carry it down that very night, but Fairfax would not suffer him to quit his family after the long and ill-repaid labours of the day, and opening the portmanteau, he disposed of some necessary articles about him, and prepared to go.

"Here is the change, sir," said Mrs. Halliday, taking up a number of shillings and sixpences which she had laid down, at her return, on one corner of the table.

"No, no," answered Fairfax; "keep it to get Susan some milk or broth every day; and I had nearly forgotten the money for the timber, Halliday. You said fifteen shillings would do?"

At the same time he took out his purse, and though there was both gold and silver

in it, Ben Halliday saw that it was very meagre. "I really do not like, sir," said the poor man; "I dare say I can manage somehow."

"Not a word, Halliday," replied Fairfax; "there is the amount. It was a bargain, you know, that you should take it. Good night to you all. I shall see you again before I leave this part of the country;" and with thanks and blessings he departed.

"Don't you think Mr. Fairfax very dull and sad, Ben?" asked his wife, when their visitor had departed. "Every now and then he seemed to mope sadly."

"I'll tell you what it is, Bella," replied her husband; "I know as well as if I could see it all; he's sad about Mr. Graham and

Miss Margaret, and well he may be. He would fain help them too, if he could; but it is clear he is not rich, and though he can help such as us, he can't help such as them, and every now and then he goes casting about in his head how to do it, and does not find a way anyhow. That is it, I am sure; because he would not talk of them at all."

But it is time to turn, and explain many circumstances that were in Ben Halliday's mind at that moment.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE RUIN AND THE SACRIFICE.

When Allan Fairfax quitted Allerdale House two years and a half before, Mr. Graham lay upon a bed of sickness. The attack had been sudden and unexpected, for he was a man temperate in all his habits, placid and equable in disposition, of a strong and healthy constitution, and showing no tendency to the disease which had as-

sailed him. But his illness was not without a cause. Some slight anxiety had induced him, on the day of the expedition to Brugh, to go at an earlier hour than usual to Brownswick, and allow his guests to proceed without him upon an excursion which he would have willingly shared. The anxiety was, as I have said, slight, very slight. He had written about a week before to a great merchant in Liverpool, whom he had aided in an extensive speculation, and, in fact, befriended through life, for some information regarding the result of the operation of which he, Mr. Graham, had furnished about one-third of the funds, and he had received no answer to his letter. The sum at stake was about fifty thousand pounds, but

to a man of Mr. Graham's wealth it was not sufficient to cause any great uneasiness. Nevertheless, he was a man of business, and he was not satisfied. He therefore set out for Brownswick to see the letters at the bank, and take whatever steps might be necessary, rather than enjoy a ride with his daughter and his friends. The first news that met him was that Messrs. —— and Co. had failed, already gathered from the newspapers by his chief clerk. "There must be considerable assets," thought Mr. Graham, "and I am very sorry for them. If they had dealt more frankly, and told me the difficulty, perhaps I might have been able to avert so unfortunate a result."

He was turning over his letters while

these ideas passed through his mind, and at length he fixed upon one the handwriting of which he knew, and opened it. As he read, his brow grew dark; and well it might do so, for he found that there would not be paid a shilling in the pound, that the man in whose honour he had trusted had been actually insolvent at the time when the money was advanced, and had borrowed it merely to retrieve, if possible, his fallen fortunes, by risking another's means in a rash speculation.

"This is gambling," said Mr. Graham, "and gambling with other people's money. It is dishonourable—it is ungrateful." He felt the ingratitude more than all. It was, indeed, the first considerable sum he had

ever lost, and it mortified him the more because it was the first; but the ingratitude of a man whom he had so often served and assisted, his want of confidence and frankness, inflicted a severe pang upon him, and he brooded over it during the whole day. "The money," he said to his head clerk, in directing him to answer the letter, "is a trifle compared with the insincerity and the want of good faith. Pray make them feel that I am less pained at the loss than at the deceit and ingratitude of the conduct pursued towards me."

Nevertheless, he pursued his usual habits for several hours, read the rest of his letters, answered many of them with his own hand, looked at various accounts, and pre-

pared to return home, when the result of all was, as we have already seen, a terrific apoplectic stroke. His good constitution came to the aid of his friend the surgeon, and he recovered from the fit of apoplexy which had seized him, but not entirely. Mr. Graham was never the same man as before. He had a numbness of the right arm and leg, the clear manly enunciation was gone, he tripped over small obstructions in his way, and his mind was not so clear and firm. It was the same with his fortunes as with his health. That day was the turning point of his fate; that blow he never wholly recovered. The conduct of his affairs was feeble and uncertain; neglected during six weeks of sick-

ness, they became complicated, and small obstructions proved too much for him. Besides, the failure of the house in which he had trusted so fully, entailed the failure of several others with which he was connected. Other speculations turned out unfortunate; there were two runs upon the bank in one month; he was obliged to realize at a great loss; the jealous and the envious began to triumph and to decry. But why need I pursue all the painful details? In one short year, which, let it be remarked, was a year of crisis and of panic, Mr. Graham was a ruined man. Amidst all that he lost there was one thing Graham did not lose — his honour, and his sense of right and justice. He did not, when he found fortune unfavourable, and

one thing failing after another, either discharge servants or change his style of living, for he believed that to do so would only injure his credit and render recovery hopeless; but he kept his eye always vigilantly upon his accounts, and when he found that nothing was left but barely sufficient to pay all he owed and leave a mere competence for himself and his family, he announced his intention of stopping payment the next day. The same night, his head clerk absconded with ten thousand pounds. Mr. Graham was a bankrupt; but still his property paid twenty shillings in the pound, and left over and above, for himself and daughter, the sum of thirty pounds per annum, an old annuity which he had bought up, and,

in ready money, one hundred pounds. Strange to say, this sad reverse affected his health much less than might have been anticipated. It was Mrs. Graham who suffered. She had many acquaintances who had flattered her prosperity; but her haughty assumption had not left her one friend to console or assist in adversity. Every neighbour triumphed in her fall; those whom she had mortified now sought and found many an occasion to mortify her in return. Mrs. Graham could not brook adversity, and she died within three months after the failure of her husband's bank.

When the announcement was made that the bank would stop payment next day,

Mr. Graham had calculated that after paying all, six hundred per annum would be left to him, and the robbery of his clerk did not of course amount to a deprivation of the whole of that sum. But the most moderate men will in some degree overrate the value of their own possessions, and Mr. Graham had done so. Besides, expenses were incurred to a greater extent than he had expected, so that the result was, as I have said, beggary, or something very like it. When he gave up his property, he had taken a small and comfortable house in Brownswick, but when he discovered how much he had over-estimated his resources, that house was far too expensive for him, and he removed to a

little cottage belonging to good Doctor Kenmore, at the village of Allenchurch, which his friend put at his disposal, furnished as it was. But the stunning effect began to work, and one morning all power left the side which had been previously affected. In this state he still continued with his general bodily health good, but no capability of moving, except with the assistance of his daughter, from his bed to his chair by the fire-side, and with his mental faculties, especially his memory, sadly impaired. It was not, indeed, that the powers of thought and reason were gone; they were only inert, and from time to time, by a great effort, he could rouse himself to argue or to judge as sanely as

ever. As very often happens, too, the qualities of the heart seemed to have become more keen and sensible, as the powers of mind and body had decayed. Affection, friendship, compassion of others, sympathy with suffering, were all more easily, and yet more deeply excited than in former years, when reason was strong and active to guide and control them. But there is another, of whom we have as yet said little in her day of adversity, and to her we must now turn.

Margaret Graham had in no degree given way under the evils which blasted her own prospects in life, ruined her father's fortune and health, and deprived her of her mother. The high qualities of

her mind and heart seemed but to rise in energy as opportunity was afforded for their exertion. Not a murmur escaped her lips, and although the first shock was terrible, yet it was for her father she felt, not for herself. If she wept, it was in her own chamber. None saw a tear in her eyes, or its trace upon her cheek. She was as cheerful in the small house at Brownswick as she had been in the mansion by the lake, and in the cottage at Allenchurch she was cheerful still. She had tended her mother through the short illness which ended in Mrs. Graham's death, with unremitting care; she bore the peevishness and complaints of a proud, irritable, and disappointed woman in the

hours of sickness and despair, with unfailing meekness and patience, and now she was the guardian angel of her father's declining life. She sat by him, she read to him, she watched him, and in every interval she laboured eagerly to turn those accomplishments which he had bestowed upon her youth to some account for the purpose of supporting his old age. She felt grateful to God that instruction had been afforded to her early, and that she had not neglected the opportunity. Yet it was difficult to render her talents available. Lessons she could not give, so that her knowledge of music was of no service. She could not leave Mr. Graham alone during the whole day, while she was teach-

ing, with an inexperienced servant girl of fifteen, the only person to attend him. But she drew and painted in water-colours very beautifully, and she passed a great part of each day in painting landscapes, which she sent into the town for sale. The sum that she obtained for each was a mere trifle, and after a while she devised the means of rendering her skill more profitable. Few people in Brownswick had taste to appreciate the productions of her pencil, or inclination to buy a mere drawing. But multitudes were fond of painted baskets, and boxes, and bags, and not half the time was required by her ready fingers to complete a dozen of them which she would have expended on a finished

drawing. Nevertheless, the resource was a very poor one; it enabled her to supply a few comforts for her father, but that was all. By the end of the first year after the bankruptcy, the hundred pounds which remained, after the payment in full of all claims, was nearly expended, and nothing was left but the small annuity of thirty pounds. Margaret saw that another step must be taken in the descent—that the servant girl must be discharged, that she must do all and everything herself; but still Margaret Graham did not murmur. Her great difficulty was, how she should speak to her father upon such a step. She knew it would cause him a deep and terrible pang, not for his own

sake so much as for hers, and she shrank from the task. Even when it was accomplished, she thought their situation would be terrible, with nothing but thirty pounds each year to supply her own wants and the still greater ones of her father. If by her own exertions she could add twenty pounds each year to that sum, it was as much as she could do, and perhaps more. The first step, however, must be to discharge the servant, and she determined to ask their good old friend Doctor Kenmore, who came to see Mr. Graham almost every day, to break the necessity to him. She took an opportunity of speaking to the worthy old man when he appeared one morning earlier than usual, and before

her father was up. She laid before him a complete view of the case, and the worthy doctor was moved almost to tears.

"You are an angel, Margaret," he said, looking in her face—"you are an angel; that's clear to me; and I will tell you what we must do, my dear; we must cheat your poor father. Now, don't look surprised, for the matter is only this. It was with the greatest difficulty in the world I got Graham to accept the loan of this cottage and furniture. He never would be beholden to any man for a penny in his life, even when he was a lad; and when I spoke to him the other day about helping him a little, he got so excited, that I thought he would have done himself harm. Now,

Margaret, I have neither wife nor child, kith nor kin, and am well to do in the world. I don't spend one-half of what I have got; and you must just let me make up your little income to one hundred a year, and not say a word to your father about it."

The beautiful face of Margaret Graham deepened greatly in colour; but she laid her hand kindly and tenderly on that of the good old man, while she answered, "I cannot; I must not; I never deceived my father in anything. I promised him solemnly never to have any concealment from him, and I dare not break my word. I would do anything, my dear good friend, to obtain comforts and necessaries

for him; I would work all day at teaching; I would go out as a governess, only that he cannot spare me; I would do anything except deceive him, but that I cannot do, even in such a matter as this."

"Well, Margaret, well," said the old doctor, with a rueful shake of his head; "you are as bad as your father. I will talk to him, and see what impression I can make upon him. He is my earliest, my best, and dearest friend: we were boys at school together; and I am sure, if at any time I had wanted a thousand pounds, he would have given it to me without a thought. I will see what can be done with him; but you must not discharge the lass before we have spoken further."

To this condition Margaret willingly consented; but unhappily all the skill and friendly zeal of Dr. Kenmore were exerted upon Mr. Graham in vain. He said he would not live upon charity, or sponge upon friendship. If he required anything further than his limited means allowed, he would demand it of the parish, where he had a right to apply; and he added much more in the same strain, in which early habits of thought were seen, only rendered more keen and vehement by age and infirmity. There are certain maladies, which, as is well known, render the patient obstinate and pertinacious to an exceeding degree, and such is, I believe, usually the case in affections of the brain similar to

that under which Mr. Graham was suffering. Argument on a subject in regard to which he had long before made up his mind only irritated him, and rendered him more attached to his own opinion, so that Doctor Kenmore was obliged to give the matter up in despair, only beseeching Margaret to keep the servant on till the cold weather was past. He himself, in the meantime, was more frequently than ever at the cottage, and Margaret had often the pleasure of seeing some dish upon the table which she had not ordered, some little addition to their comfort which she herself would not have ventured to think of. Now it was a large salmon, now some fine trout, now game, now the Christmas turkey and

chine. She divined easily where all these presents came from, but she took care to ask no questions, as they were sent to her father, not herself, and Mr. Graham, in his feeble state, did not remark the fact, or compare very nicely his own means and the expense which such delicacies would imply. But Margaret remarked also that various articles of consumption which might be classed under the head of necessaries lasted amazingly long. It was wonderful to what an extent a ton of coals would protract themselves, and with lights it was the same. She saw through the friendly fraud, and was somewhat uneasy; but what could she do? Old Doctor Kenmore seemed utterly unconscious; he came

and went every day, and sometimes twice, but he never spoke of coals or candles, or anything of the kind. One day, on the 25th of March, he seemed a little uneasy when Mr. Graham directed his daughter to write to Sheffield for the usual certificate of the existence of the person on whose life his little annuity was granted; but he replied—

"Let me write for it, Graham. Margaret has plenty else to do."

A terrible doubt instantly took possession of Margaret's mind; and her face turned very pale; but she dared ask no question at the time, and her father readily consented to his friend's proposal. The life on which the annuity was secured was better

than her father's by twenty years; but yet there was something odd in Dr. Kenmore's manner, and it seemed certain to Margaret that their last prop was struck from under them. It was three days after that when she first had an opportunity of speaking to the old surgeon alone; but then she seized it immediately. Uncertainty, she thought, was worse than any reality, and stopping their kind friend as he was hurrying away through the little garden, she said—

"Stay, stay a moment. There is one question I have to ask you, dear doctor. What made you so anxious to write about the annuity?"

"Because I thought I could manage matters of business better than a girl,"

replied Dr. Kenmore, abruptly, and was again hurrying away.

Margaret detained him, however, laying her hand upon his arm, and saying—

"One question more; I must know the truth,—is Mr. Jones dead?"

The old man turned towards her, and gazed in her face with a look of solemn earnestness, and then took her hand in his.

"Margaret," he said, after a pause, "will you be my wife?—I say, will you be my wife?—for, on my soul, that is the only way I see of helping you and your father."

Margaret's surprise was very great. Such an idea had never crossed her mind—the possibility of such a thing had never struck her. But then came crowding upon

her mind all the particulars of her father's situation; his and her utter destitution; his broken health; his hopeless prospects; his need of care and constant watchfulness; the utter impossibility of her supporting him without leaving him; his desolation and wretchedness if she did — all, all came rushing upon her like a torrent, carrying away every obstacle, every repugnance. One moment of terrible struggle took place within her; and then, gazing in the old man's face, seriously and sadly, she asked—

"Are you serious?"

"Yes, Margaret, I am," he answered, in a tone as grave as her own; "there is but a choice of evils, my dear young lady. I have done what I could; I have been

anxious to do more, but I have been prevented, as you know. I have turned the matter over and over again in my own mind, and I see nothing on earth that I can propose but this. It is hard upon you, Margaret, I know; but as my wife you will have a home for your father, with every sort of comfort which you could desire and which his situation needs. Neither will it be as if he went to the house of a stranger. He will sit down for the rest of his life by the fireside of his earliest friend. Consider of it, Margaret, my dear. I do not ask you to decide hastily, for I am only moved by one feeling in all this: affection and friendship for you and him. Consider of it."

"No," said Margaret, warmly, taking

his hand in hers, "I will not consider of it. I say yes at once, with deep and heartfelt gratitude for all your kindness, and I will try to the very best of my power to repay it to the utmost."

The old surgeon pressed her hand, saying, "I know you, Margaret, I know you well; and although there is not another woman in England whom I would ask to be an old man's wife, yet I am sure you will love me as much as you can, and will leave nothing on earth undone to make my last years comfortable and happy. Of my own fate I have no fear; and in regard to yours, I will try hard to make you banish all regret. Now I had better go and tell your father."

"No," said Margaret Graham, "no; I

will tell him myself; for he may ask questions which no one but myself can answer, and it is better that it should be all done at once."

She paused a moment, and then added, "I will tell him that you offer me as much happiness as I believe it is possible for me to know in life."

"You are a good girl, Margaret," said the old surgeon, with an almost sorrowful shake of the head; "you are a dear good girl."

"And you are the best and kindest of men," answered Margaret, with tears in her eyes; and turning away, she left him, and went into the room where her father sat.

"You have been talking a long time in

the garden with Kenmore, my love," said Mr. Graham; "now, remember, Margaret, I will have no borrowing money that we cannot pay; I would rather go into the workhouse than do that."

"We have not been talking about that at all, my dear father," said Margaret, in a cheerful tone— a very cheerful tone. "He has just been proposing to me that which makes me as happy as anything within the bounds of probability could, I believe, make me. He has been proposing that I should marry him.

"You, Margaret!" exclaimed Mr. Graham. "You marry Kenmore! Why, he is two years older than I am."

"I do not think that matters," answered

Margaret; "and of one thing I am very sure, that amongst all the younger men who were once our acquaintance, and have now forgotten us, I should not find one more generous, good, and kind. Besides, these things depend a good deal upon taste, and I am quite certain, my dear father, that, take the country for forty miles round, there is no one I should prefer to himself."

"Indeed, indeed," said Mr. Graham; "well, my love, well; but I did think——. However, I will not try to control you. You always judge right, my Margaret; but you must let me live near you. I must see you every day."

"And all day long, my dear father," answered Margaret Graham. "I would

not have consented to enter any house of which you were not to be an inhabitant; but Dr. Kenmore thought of that himself, as he does, indeed, of everything that can make us comfortable."

"Well, it is very strange," said Mr. Graham, and fell into a deep fit of thought.

Cheerful smiles are very often paid for by bitter tears, and it was so in some degree with Margaret Graham. When she had retired to rest, and her door was locked, she wept for more than an hour; but the next morning she rose again, apparently as cheerful as ever. But scenes are coming on, the details of which we must dwell upon somewhat more minutely.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE INAUSPICIOUS MARRIAGE.

THE matter of the marriage was talked over between Mr. Graham and his old friend; but Doctor Kenmore saw clearly that Margaret knew best how to reconcile her father to an arrangement by no means consonant to his own views, and he therefore followed as she led. The worthy doctor, too, became smarter in his appear-

ance. He had his long grey hair cut by the most fashionable barber in Brownswick. He no longer affected the modes of thirty years before, but came out in a bran new suit of black, with trowsers upon his legs; but his buckles—the beloved buckles in his shoes, which had belonged to his father, perhaps his grandfather—those he would not part with. His house was hastily put in order; and all the people of Brownswick began to ask, "What is going to happen to Doctor Kenmore?" It was soon buzzed about that he was going to marry Miss Graham; and some laughed; and some said, "Poor thing;" and some declared that they detested mercenary matches; but all agreed in the story that it was to take place

immediately, and on this point they were right. Margaret did not seek for any delay; her mind was made up, her fate was sealed, and she thought it would be wrong and insulting to a benefactor to show the slightest appearance of reluctance.

March had passed away into April; the marriage was to take place in a week; and Doctor Kenmore had just left Mr. Graham and his daughter, when a note was brought up to Margaret in her room, with information that the messenger waited for an answer. She did not know the hand, but she opened it hastily. It contained the following words, and was dated from the "White Lion," the great inn at Brownswick:—

"Dear Miss Graham," the writer said, "I have just come back from India, in which distant land I was ordered to join my regiment immediately after I last saw you. On my return, I found much melancholy intelligence awaiting me; but my first journey has been to Cumberland, where clearer tidings of all that has befallen you and yours reached me last night. I know that Mr. Graham is ill, and does not receive any visitors, but allow me to plead the privilege of an old friend, and beg of you to let me have the pleasure of seeing you for a few minutes, even if your excellent father is himself too unwell to give me admission. I would not venture to come in person without ask-

ing your permission, but I do trust and hope that you have not yet entirely forgotten

"Yours faithfully and ever,

"ALLAN FAIRFAX."

Margaret laid down the note upon the table, and trembled violently. "Yours faithfully and ever," she repeated, in a low, sad tone; but the very next instant she added—

"This is weak, this is wrong;" and opening her writing-desk, she sat down to answer the letter. For a moment, she felt sick and giddy; the paper seemed to move to and fro under her eyes; her hand would hardly hold the pen; but Margaret had learned the hard lesson of making the high

purpose of the soul command the thoughts of the mind, and support the body in its weakness; and, after a struggle, she wrote words that almost broke her heart to trace.

"My dear sir," she said, "we have not forgotten you, believe me; and under any other circumstances, I should be extremely happy to see you, and thank you for your kind interest. My father is somewhat better in health than he was; but still our situation is such that I must, with great regret, decline the pleasure of your visit. At some future time I trust I shall be better able than now to express the thanks of

"Your old acquaintance,

"MARGARET GRAHAM."

She would not read it over when she had written it, but sealed it hastily, and calling the maid, directed her to give it to the messenger. When that was done, and she was alone, she sat and gazed at the paper which bore the handwriting of Fairfax, and it was several minutes before she moved. She then only uttered the words "madness and folly!" and taking up the note, she put it in the fire. It burned slowly away, a small spark lingered and wandered here and there, and then went out, leaving all black.

"Such has been my fate!" said Margaret to herself; "I will think of it no more—no, no, not for a moment."

During the evening she was very grave,

but the next morning she resumed her ordinary demeanour, and nothing occurred for two days that could shake it. Then, indeed, old Dr. Kenmore told her, in an ordinary tone, that in going his usual round of visits, he had seen a young gentleman whom he recollected having once met in the grounds at Allerdale with Mr. Graham.

"I have not told your father, my dear," he continued, "because I thought it might vex him to hear the lad was wandering about down here, without ever trying to see his old friend."

Margaret was agitated; but she would not hear a charge against Allan Fairfax unrefuted, and she replied—

"No, my dear doctor, he did try to see my father. He wrote a note to me expressing a wish to come, but I declined; as, indeed, I have done with every one."

"You did right, Margaret," replied Doctor Kenmore; "Graham should be kept free from all agitation that can be avoided, and the very name of Allerdale moves him a good deal still."

There ended the conversation; and the wedding-day came rapidly. I will not attempt to pry into the secrets of Margaret's heart; I will not inquire what the passing moments brought to her; I will not dwell upon the thoughts of the day or of the night, as one after the other went by, hurrying on the moment of her fate. She

grew somewhat pale and thin in that last week; but she gave no one cause to say that she seemed melancholy. A little graver than usual she might be; but what woman can prepare to change the whole relations of her life, to enter upon a new and all-important task, and not be thoughtful. In all else but that light shade of meditation, her demeanour was to every eye the same as usual. She smiled sweetly upon her father, kindly upon the good old surgeon, was pleased with all he did to please her, and approved and confirmed all the arrangements he had made. She preferred only one request, that the marriage might be as private as possible, and to that Doctor Kenmore readily agreed.

"We will have nobody there, Margaret, but our ownselves and the lawyer, and your old acquaintance, Miss Harding. The people who came would only very mistakenly call us two fools—me an old one and you a young one; but we will not mind what they say — a nine days' wonder never lasts ten."

Mr. Graham did not meet matters quite so calmly as his daughter. He seemed ill at ease, and often sighed heavily; and though Margaret, whenever she saw his spirits depressed, talked cheerfully of coming years, yet it seemed to have little effect. He had watched her mind and character from the cradle; and, perhaps, even though stricken with severe infirmity,

and enfeebled in body and mind, the parent's eye saw the daughter's heart.

His corporeal health, however, did not seem to suffer; on the contrary, leaning on Margaret's arm, he walked slowly out into the garden. He went the next day, in his good old friend's little phaeton, to see the room prepared for him at Dr. Kenmore's house, and he showed himself pleased with all the arrangements made for his comfort, and still more with the attention paid to Margaret's tastes and habits. He approved, too, of the plan which Margaret proposed—namely that, after the ceremony, he should remain for the rest of the day at the cottage, while she went to take possession of her new

dwelling, and that early the next morning the doctor's phaeton should come to bring him to Brownswick. Margaret took care that an old and faithful servant of her future husband should be ordered to stay at the cottage to watch and assist him during that day, and he seemed so well that she had no fears.

The day preceding the marriage was a busy one for Dr. Kenmore; he had a thousand things to do besides seeing all his most important patients. The good doctor himself was fatigued, though he was a hale, active little man, and his handsome, short-legged cob was completely knocked up. But that day went by, and the sun rose upon another.

The little church of Allenchurch was, luckily, some way out of the village; there was no crowd, no gazers, and Margaret Graham stood before the altar with her father's old schoolfellow. It was a fine, clear Spring day, one of the first which had visited the world that year, and Margaret Graham wanted yet three months and a day of being two-and-twenty—Doctor Kenmore was sixty-eight. She had dressed herself very plainly, and in a manner to make her look older than she was; but nothing could conceal that she was very young, and very, very beautiful. Her whole demeanour through the service was what any one who knew her well would have expected of Margaret Gra-

ham — graceful, quiet, grave; but it was very calm also. The trial was not then —it was over.

The words were spoken, and she said "I will!" distinctly; the ring was upon her finger — she was Doctor Kenmore's wife. The curtain fell between her and the past; the prospect of the future was clear before her—clear and cold!

It was impossible for Mr. Graham to be present; the vicar of his former parish gave Margaret away, and she and her husband drove at once to the cottage, where her father waited to see them, before they went to their home. They stayed with him about an hour, and then immediately turned to Brownswick. Doc-

tor Kenmore had gone to the church in a pair of tied shoes, but as soon as he got home, he resumed his large silver buckles, declaring that his feet felt cold without them.

There were a great many things to be seen to and arranged about the house, so that there was plenty of occupation till dinner-time, for the good surgeon's habits were like his clothes, in an old fashion, and he dined at four exactly. A few minutes before that time, he pointed out to Margaret a large iron safe in his own little study, saying—

"In there, my dear, are all my papers of importance; and they are valuable, for God has prospered my handiwork, and

there are several mortgages and deeds; but, above all, my will, which I made a week ago in such terms as to render it effectual if I died before or after my marriage."

Before Margaret could answer, the good doctor's footman came in to inform him that one Mr. Lifrid was there to pay his bill. The surgeon was inclined to send him away again, but the bill was a heavy one, amounting to nearly a hundred pounds. Mr. Lifrid was going away to London, and Doctor Kenmore went out to receive him. When he returned, he had a roll of notes and some gold in his hand, but it was announced at the same time that dinner was upon the table, and thrusting the money

into his pocket, he led his bride to the table. Hardly, however, were the soup and fish gone when the bell rang violently, and Doctor Kenmore said to the servant, in a very imperative tone—

"I will go out to see no one; let them go to Mr M'Swine's; he's as good a doctor as I am, and thinks himself better."

The man returned in a moment, but his face was very grave, and he whispered a word or two in Doctor Kenmore's ear. The old surgeon's countenance fell.

"Order round the phaeton directly," he replied; and Margaret, gazing at him inquiringly, said—

"My father?"

The old surgeon rose and took her hand, answering—

"I will go and see him, my dear, and come back and let you know how he is going on."

But Margaret answered—

"I must go with you;" and he made no objection.

They were both clad for going forth, and standing in the passage with the door half open, waiting for the phaeton, when a poor woman, dressed as the wife of a labourer of the lowest class, looked in, laying her hand at the same time upon the bell; but Doctor Kenmore stopped her, saying—

"What do you want, Mrs. Halliday? —I cannot see anybody to-night—I am going out; Mr. Graham has fallen down in another fit."

"Ah, poor gentleman!" said Mrs. Halliday; "I don't want to stop you, sir, and indeed I have no right; but Ben is very bad, poor fellow; he came home yesterday with a stitch in his side, and to-day he cannot fetch his breath at all, and is terrible red in the face, and restless. I went over this morning to the Union to get an order for the doctor to see him—that is seven miles, and then I had to come here for Mr. M'Swine, and that is nine more, and Mr. M'Swine is out, and his shop-boy says he wont be home till ten or eleven, and poor Ben says he is sure he will die, and I am ready to drop."

"And seven miles more to walk home," said Doctor Kenmore; "I will see your

husband — he is a good man — I will see him. Here, come in and take a glass of wine; M'Swine is in, but he does not choose to go," continued the surgeon, muttering to himself. "This comes of farming out the poor to the lowest contractor. I will see your husband before I sleep, Mrs. Halliday," and he poured the woman out a large glass of wine, adding, however, some water, to prevent it from getting into her head.

By the time this was all done, the phaeton was at the door, and hurrying away with his wife and the servant (not without a regret that there was no place in the small vehicle for Mrs. Halliday), the good old man drove to Allenchurch, and arrived at the door

of Mr. Graham's residence just as night fell.

The door was opened as soon as the sound of wheels was heard, and Margaret ran in, inquiring eagerly for her father. The woman replied, that he seemed a little better, and she instantly hurried to his room. In the meanwhile, Doctor Kenmore had ordered the servant calmly to drive the horse back to Brownswick, but not to go to bed before twelve unless he heard from him, and having given these orders, he also entered the house, and went to the room where Mr. Graham lay. As soon as he saw him, and heard his breathing, he said—

"Margaret, my dear, we must remain here all night; this is a case in which I

cannot bleed him, for though it might produce temporary relief, it would be followed by more serious evils. We must proceed more slowly, but more safely, and I trust we shall succeed. He must be raised up, and the head sponged with cold water; bottles of hot water to the feet directly, and if we can get some sal volatile down, so much the better."

All was done which the good old surgeon recommended; the stertorous breathing ceased in about an hour; Mr. Graham moved his right arm and put his hand to his head, and a moment or two after, opened his eyes and looked round confusedly. The next instant he closed them again, and fell into a quiet and gentle sleep, with easy

breathing, and a face, which had previously been very pale, and covered with profuse perspiration, but which now resumed its natural hue.

"Now everything must be kept quite quiet," said the good old doctor, in a whisper to Margaret; "re-action will take place in a few hours, and then he must lose a little blood, after which I trust he will be quite safe. You sit by him, my dear, till I return; for I must not forget poor Ben Halliday, and there is nothing to be done here for six hours at least."

"But you have sent away the phaeton, have you not?" asked Margaret, somewhat anxiously, and, going to the window, she looked out.

"Never mind, my dear, I will walk," said Doctor Kenmore; "it is a beautiful evening, and the quarter-moon there, just rising over the trees round the church, will light me better than the sun. I sha'n't be long, for I know what is the matter with Halliday already. He has got inflammation of the lungs, and I must bleed him largely. To-morrow it will be too late, and M'Swine would let the poor fellow die, — so good night, my dear, for the present."

Thus saying, good Doctor Kenmore departed, and Margaret sat down to watch by her father's bed-side, falling into a long, sad fit of meditation, which lasted for a considerable time. Hour went by on hour,

eight, nine, ten o'clock came, eleven struck, twelve approached, and Doctor Kenmore did not come.

## CHAPTER IX.

### MEDICAL RELIEF.

It is time now to turn to the history of the persons towards whose cottage Doctor Kenmore had bent his steps; and I must take it up again at the period where I last quitted it. Allan Fairfax left the family of Ben Halliday comparatively happy. His children had had food—one sufficient meal, which was more than they had obtained for

months. The sum of thirteen shillings and some pence remained; the change out of the sovereign. Think of it, reader! What does it seem to you? A trifle, not sufficient to provide the daily dinner that smokes upon your table; little more than the price of two of those bottles of wine, whereof so many are drunk in your household every week. And yet, to Ben Halliday it seemed a treasure. It would add nearly fifty per cent. to his wages for four weeks. It would keep the wolf from the door. It would give bread—bread enough; and he asked little more. The labourer—oh, the poor labourer! what a life is his, in the richest, the most industrious, the most charitable country in the world! It is not alone the

hard, unremitting daily toil for bare subsistence, which makes the sadness of his lot; it is not the privation of every material comfort, of relaxation, of warmth, of sufficient nourishment, of care in sickness for himself or his children, of everything in the shape of enjoyment; but it is the privation of hope and expectation—of prospect: the blighting not only of the present harvest but of the seed for the future crop. Is this an exaggerated picture? Let those who have lived much among the lower classes, as I have, answer. What has the British labourer at any period of his course to look forward to? what are his prospects? A life of unremitting, ill-requited toil, constant necessity, without the power of pro-

viding aught for an evil day; cold in his dwelling, want at his table, sickness in the train of want, neglect in the time of sickness; age, infirmity, and death in the rigid imprisonment of the Parish Union. Add to this, the sight of his children brought up to the same lot; to live, like him, without hope, and to die, like him, in beggary. Such are the prospects of the British labourer; and I defy any one to prove that they are, generally, better.

Take hope from man, and you render him a demon. We have done it; we are doing it; and we wonder that there are flaming ricks and stackyards smouldering in their ashes. Let us beware before it be too late, lest the fire extend somewhat

further. It was an ancient custom in Morocco to punish criminals undergoing sentence of death by giving them small handfuls of couscousou, just sufficient to keep them alive and protract their torture; but the wise rulers of Morocco impaled them first, so that they could not spring upon their tormentors. We give our men the same diet, and leave them in nearly as much misery; but we do not secure ourselves by fixing them on a stake.

However, Ben Halliday was comparatively happy. When Allan Fairfax found him, he had not a penny or a loaf of bread in the house; he had seven shillings a week as a recompence for six days' incessant profitable labour; he had himself,

his wife, a son incapable of gaining any thing, and a dying daughter to support; he had been told by his master, one of the guardians, that if he applied to the Union, he would not receive any relief, unless he came into the house with his wife and family; and that if he did come in, he should be separated from his wife and family, and be made so miserable that he should soon be glad to quit it again.* Such was his state when Fairfax found him; and now he had more than thirteen shillings in

* This is not a fiction. The case occurred within my own knowledge; the farmer made this exact reply; the labourer had three children; the wages were seven shillings a week; *but the county was not Cumberland.*

the house, and the prospect of obtaining five shillings a week more, merely for the care of a mischievous idiot. It was wealth —it was prosperity — it was happiness! How the whole family blessed Allan Fairfax! He seemed like a guardian-angel, come to save and to restore. The next morning, Ben was up before daylight, working away in the shed to render it fit for the reception of Tommy Hicks, and he had done all that could be done without boards and nails ere the sun rose, and his time of daily labour returned. In the evening he went to Brownswick, and concluded the whole arrangement with the person who paid for the idiot; and at night he worked away at the shed with

his cousin Jacob, his wife having in the meantime procured the necessary materials. By the next morning all was ready, the place made warm and tight, and on the third day, the idiot was installed, his bed and clothes moved up, and he an inmate of Ben Halliday's dwelling. They began well together. Father and mother and children did all they could to make the unhappy man comfortable, and he seemed to like the change from old Grimly's cottage. He laughed and talked amazingly, and leered fearfully about him, and said he should be very merry there, and would show them strange tricks. There was only one matter of dispute between him and Ben Halliday. He took a particular affection

for Mr. Fairfax's portmanteau, and would sit on nothing else. When it was taken from him, he turned sullen and walked out of the house, wandering about, without returning for twelve hours. He was not far distant, however; for amidst his ramblings he twice found his way to the cottage of Jacob Halliday, and seemed inclined to curry favour with his family, cutting a stick for his son Bill into various grotesque forms, in which art he was extraordinarily skilful.

I have said nothing of Fairfax's movements subsequent to the day of his return to Cumberland, except what the reader has seen in his note to Margaret; but it may be necessary to mention, that he returned

once to the cottage of Ben Halliday, the day after his former visit, and took out of his portmanteau some clothes and a dressing-case, which he sent down to the inn at Brownswick by a little boy of the village. He was seen once or twice for a day or two afterwards, but then disappeared for some time.

In the meanwhile, Jacob Halliday began to regret that he had not accepted the charge of the idiot himself; for with the perversion of affection, not unfrequent in such persons, Tommy Hicks seemed to attach himself to Jacob in proportion to the dislike and threats of the other. Besides, pecuniary matters were no better with Jacob than his cousin. It is true, he had but one child; but then his wife was not as careful

and as active as Ben's, and she bore her fate less meekly. Misery and wretchedness were at their height in his cottage. There was hardly a bed to lie on, or clothes to cover its inmates, and Jacob's impatient spirit fretted under the yoke. He used rash and angry words, and at length he went down himself, and vehemently, but not without rude eloquence, represented his condition to the farmer whom he and his cousin both served.

Farmer Stumps was irritated, and threatened to dismiss him altogether, if he heard any further complaints; and Jacob, after gazing at him sternly for a moment, turned upon his heel and walked away, muttering more than once as he went—

"We must teach them better."

Two days after, his wife seemed more contented, and he himself in better spirits; and one night he brought up to his cousin's house a porringer of very excellent soup for poor Susan. The girl was delighted with it, and said it tasted better than anything she had ever eaten; and Jacob laughed, and replied that it was made of nothing but what grew in the fields. The idiot took a spoonful, and laughed aloud, answering—

"Ay, with fur and feathers for leaves."

Jacob said nothing in return, but went away; and two days after, Tommy Hicks, after having been out till after nightfall, came back with a brace of rabbits in his hand, capering and grinning, and showing a trap of his own invention, which was

quite as well adapted for snaring hares or any other animals as those which he had caught. In vain did Ben Halliday attempt to make him comprehend that he brought himself into danger by such proceedings; in vain did Mrs. Halliday refuse to roast the rabbits for him. Tommy set to work himself, and skinned and cooked them in his own peculiar fashion, devouring them both when they were done, with all the relish that even wiser men than himself find in game of their own taking.

So far all went well enough with Ben Halliday; but three nights before the marriage day of Margaret Graham, the little boy suddenly pointed to the window about nine o'clock, and cried—

"Look, look, dad! What a pretty colour in the sky. It seems as if morning was coming already."

Ben went to the door and gazed forth, saying—

"It's the north-lights, I think." But the moment after, he exclaimed, "No, I do believe it is a great fire somewhere!" and, without waiting to take his hat, he ran out, and proceeded till he could see clear down over the moor. The road he took was not the same as that on which he had lately met Mr. Fairfax; for, as I think I have before explained, the moor extended far along the side of the hills, broken by patches of wood and cultivated ground, and in about five minutes he had a fair view of all the country

towards Brownswick. At the bottom of the descent lay the principal farm of his present master, with its rick-yard and stacks all round it, and from that point rose the fitful blaze which illuminated the whole heaven, and showed him the lines of barn and stable, housetops and trees, at about a mile and a half distance, with the undulations of the moor in red light and shade between. Two ricks were already on fire; the wind was blowing cold and strong over the yard and the buildings, and, without waiting for further examination, Ben Halliday ran on as fast as he could to give assistance. As he approached, he heard loud voices and curses and threats, but there was, at the moment, a hedge of some tall

trees between him and the scene of conflagration, and he could not perceive what was going on. When he had passed that screen, however, a sight presented itself, which has been seen more than once since in many counties in England. Three large ricks were now blazing; the wind was driving the sparks and lighted straws right upon the rest of the valuable produce of the last year's harvest. The farmer, his son, and some of his house-servants were labouring furiously to extinguish the flames, but only adding to their intensity, and endangering the rest of the property by throwing down the blazing corn. Around stood no less than twenty labourers from that and the neighbouring farms; but all their arms were

crossed upon their chests, and not a man moved a finger to save the wealth of the hard, rich man. In vain he swore, or threatened, or entreated; no one stirred.

"You villains!" he cried, "you have set it alight yourselves, I do believe!"

"No, no, Master Stumps," answered a sturdy fellow, "that wont do. We did not light it, and we wont put it out. You don't help us, why should we help you?"

"There goes the blood and sweat of many a poor, honest man, Farmer Stumps," said another, "blazing up to Heaven, to tell how you've used him."

"We should never have had a bushel of it," cried a third; "let those save it as were like to get it."

But at that moment Ben Halliday burst into the midst of them.

"For shame! for shame, men," he cried, "to stand idle there and see a neighbour's corn burn! Do you think bread would be cheaper, if all the yards in the country were in a blaze?"

"No; but wages would be higher, if masters were taught not to starve their men," said a voice not far off, and a loud laugh from several of the peasants followed.

Ben Halliday listened not to the rejoinder, but leaped over the low wall of the rick-yard, and running up to the farmer, exclaimed—

"Don't, Master Stumps; for Heaven's sake, don't stir the fire that way. You've

got plenty of rick cloths; get them all out, dip them in the pond, and draw them over the nearest stacks. We've plenty of hands to do that, even though those fellows wont help; ay, and to keep them wet with buckets too, till the engine comes up from Brownswick.

"That's a good thought—a devilish good thought!" cried the farmer. "You're a capital fellow, Ben. Here, help us to get down the cloths."

"Some one get the ladders!" cried the labourer, running with the farmer towards the loft over the barn where the rick-cloths were kept.

His simple suggestion soon changed the face of affairs. The heavy canvas-cloths

were speedily brought forth, dragged through the neighbouring pond, and then, not without great labour and exertion, drawn over the nearest ricks. Several men were employed to keep them constantly wet; the rest to throw water over the ends of the barns nearest to the fire; and the farmer's wife, daughters, and maids, though in a strange state of confusion and agitation, were directed to watch the roof of the house, and guard against the sparks catching the woodwork.

In every effort, in every exertion, Ben Halliday bore as great a share as any one; but his example had no effect upon the other labourers, who, after seeing that the fire was likely to do no more damage, and

hearing the engine coming along the road, dropped away one by one. It is a sad thing, but it too often occurs, that he who on any occasion renders the most service to others is the one who suffers, as if a certain amount of disaster was to be inflicted, and that those who turned it aside from friend, or neighbour, or country, or society, took it upon himself. Thank God, we know that such is not the case, and that all is ordered mercifully and wisely; but yet, as I have said, so it is, the greatest benefactors are the worst requited, and generally suffer by their exertions in favour of other men.

Sad, sad philosophy! Too terrible truth!

Poor Ben Halliday laboured hard for an hour and a half amidst flame and intense

heat; he was wet with the water which he brought from the pond; he was overheated with the fire and the exertion; and when all was done, and he saw that the rest of the property was safe, he turned away, hardly noticed, barely thanked, and walked musing over the moor, towards his own miserable abode. The night wind blew keen and sharp; but he went slowly, for he was both weary and sad. He had much food for thought, too; for a voice had sounded in his ear which he knew well, and had raised painful doubts and suspicions. Suddenly he quickened his pace, for he felt the blast strike and chill him; and when he lay down to rest upon his hard bed with scanty covering, an aguish shivering seized him. The next day he rose, feeble and

feeling ill; but he went to his work as usual, and returned worse. Still he would not apply to the Union for assistance—he had never received any aid from it, and he disliked the very thought; but at length the pain in his side, the difficulty of breathing, the utter prostration of strength, convinced him he was very ill — made him believe he was dying, and he consented that his wife should go and seek the aid of the parish surgeon. It was a thing that could not be refused, but, as we have seen, to obtain it she had to walk near twenty miles, and to be absent from her family the whole day.* She did not mind the toil; she

* The case, as it actually occurred, was as follows: A poor woman, whose husband was seized with acute inflammation, living at S——, went thence to N——

did not even care about seeing Ben Halliday written down as "Pauper," so that she obtained speedy help for him; but when she got to Brownswick, and found that aid was likely to be delayed some eighteen hours longer, the poor woman's heart sunk. The

to get an order from the overseer for medical relief, the distance there and back being five miles. She had then to carry the order to E——, five miles, but on presenting it to the medical officer at E——, he told her that her house was in a parish out of his district, and she was sent back five miles to N——. She was then sent by the overseer to the relieving officer at D——, about two miles. The officer was not at home, and she could get no aid that night, but returned to her own house, a distance of more than three miles. Medical attendance was not obtained till the middle of the next day, when she had walked eight miles in addition to the twenty she had previously journeyed.

Union authorities were bent upon lowering the poor's rates; it was the object of the institution—they thought it the sole object —for they very well knew, as to its improving the character of the labourer by throwing him more upon his own exertions, that was all nonsense—parliamentary-commission-report nonsense. They took care, in their individual capacity, that his own exertions should be as unfruitful as possible; the new law and the increase of population only gave them the opportunity of doing so more easily. The old law, by an easy, constitutional, and, if wisely administered, safe operation, acted as a check upon the rapacity of employers: it provided that what was not paid in wages should be paid

in poor's-rates; but that law had been swept away, and the object now was to reduce the rates. They, therefore, cut down everything, and amongst the rest, the allowance to medical officers. They demanded tenders; they demanded no testimony of ability, skill, kindness, conscientiousness: all they demanded was cheapness. The cheapest man in Brownswick was Mr. M'Swine, surgeon and apothecary; and he was appointed. But Mr. M'Swine had no inclination to put himself out of the way for paupers. He farmed them upon an average of twopence-halfpenny per head for medicine and attendance, and it was not to be expected that he should give them much of either. His was a true homœopathic system as to

the former, and as to the latter, he called on the sick poor when it was convenient. The more of them that died, the better for him, provided it could not be proved that it was his fault. It is all very well to presume that men will not be scoundrels, but much better not to tempt them to be so. Mr. M'Swine was at home when Mrs. Halliday came with the order, but his shop-boy had directions what to say on such occasions, and the poor wife of as good a man as ever existed stood before his door in despair. She saw some one ring Dr. Kenmore's bell: she knew him to be a good, kind, humane man, though somewhat rough, and taking heart of grace, she went over, too, after a few minutes' thought.

The good doctor's reception of her we

have already seen, and, revived by the wine he had given, she turned her steps homeward with hope refreshed. She found her husband tossing about anxiously in bed, and trying every position in order to draw his breath more easily, but in vain. The two children were close to his bedside, the sick girl at the pillow, the boy near the foot. In the further corner of the hut sat the idiot, Tommy Hicks, on the beloved portmanteau, talking to himself in a low voice, and cutting a stick, according to custom.

Ben Halliday's first question was, "Is Mr. M'Swine coming, Bella? If he does not make haste, it will be too late."

"No, Ben, but Doctor Kenmore is," answered his wife, drawing near, and sitting

down on the side of the bed; "he will be here directly, God bless him; and he gave me a glass of wine to comfort me."

"Ah, he is a good man," said Ben Halliday, "and he'll cure me, if any one can. Now run out, Charley," he continued, in a lower voice, "and see what it was Tommy Hicks put away under the thatch. He is always hiding something, like a tame raven."

The boy ran out, but the moment the idiot saw him approach the thatch, he started up to follow him. "Sit down, Tommy Hicks," exclaimed Mrs. Halliday, in an authoritative tone, fixing her eyes upon him as she spoke, and the idiot resumed his seat without a word. The little boy, Charles, returned the next minute with

a table-knife which Tommy Hicks had hid under the thatch; and a candle being lighted, Mrs. Halliday prepared herself a cup of tea, as some refreshment after her long walk. About three-quarters of an hour elapsed, and Ben Halliday became anxious, with the impatience of feverish illness, for the arrival of Doctor Kenmore. The little boy was sent out to look along the road by the moonlight, and see if he was coming. Nobody was in sight, however, but their kinsman, Jacob, who was wending his way slowly towards the moor. After a few minutes' pause, the boy went out again, but this time he returned instantly, saying, "Here he comes—here he comes, with his stick up to his nose; I see him quite well."

The sick girl got up from the stool by her father's side to leave a place for the doctor; and as soon as his step was heard approaching, Charley Halliday opened the door. As soon as he entered, however, Tommy Hicks started up with a laugh, and thrust the stick he was cutting between the good old surgeon's legs, nearly throwing him down, and exclaiming—

"Ride in, Doctor Kenmore."

The good man on whom he played off this trick was constitutionally somewhat irascible, and several things had occurred to vex him on a day which he had set apart as a day for happiness. Without more ado, then, he lifted his cane and struck Tommy Hicks a smart blow over the shoulders, saying—

"I'll teach you to play me such tricks you mischievous devil!"

With a howl of pain and rage the idiot ran out of the cottage, and Doctor Kenmore approaching Ben Halliday's bed-side, sat down, and resumed his kindly nature at once.

"Well, my poor fellow," he said; "so you have got yourself into a bad way. Inflammation of the lungs, caught helping Farmer Stumps to put out the fire."

As he spoke, he laid his hand on Halliday's pulse, and the labourer replied—

"I don't know what it is, doctor, but I am very bad—I never was so bad as this."

"Well, you sha'n't die this time, Ben," answered Doctor Kenmore, putting his hands in his pockets; "give me a basin,

Mrs. Halliday; we must have a good drop of blood, Ben;" and taking out a pocket-book and two rolls of list, he spread them out upon the bed and chose a lancet. Ben Halliday's sleeve was then tucked up, his brawny arm extended, grasping the doctor's cane, and in a minute after the thick, dark blood was spouting forth into the basin as if it had been propelled from a syringe. Doctor Kenmore suffered it to flow for several minutes, watching the labourer's face as he did so with earnest attention; but at last Halliday spoke himself, saying, with a sort of sigh of relief—

"Oh, that is so comfortable! it seems as if some one was pouring cool water upon the hot place in my side."

"I know that," answered Doctor Kenmore; "but we must go on till you feel yourself faint,—ay, and must repeat it to-morrow; in these cases it is no use doing things by halves. Open and shut your hand on the stick, my man—do ye feel faint?"

"A little, sir, and not much," answered Ben Halliday, in a low voice; but the next moment he fell back in the bed, and Doctor Kenmore put his thumb on the vein, saying, "That is all right."

Mrs. Halliday was a little frightened; but she had great confidence in the doctor, and in a few minutes her husband was restored to consciousness, and declared that he felt comparatively quite well.

"Ay, Ben, but still you will need to be bled to-morrow again," answered Doctor Kenmore. "But we must manage the matter shrewdly, Goody Halliday. If M'Swine does not come to see him to-morrow, before twelve, let me know, and if he does, tell him I said Ben was not to be bled any more, and then he is sure to bleed him."

Doctor Kenmore knew his professional brother well; and after giving a few more directions, and leaving a blister, which he had brought for Mr. Graham, to be put upon Ben Halliday's side, he bade the grateful family farewell, and set out upon his return towards Allenchurch. He was seen by a servant of the manufacturer who had bought

Mr. Graham's former house, just at the crossing of two roads. He was met by a cottager and a little boy, about a quarter of a mile further on, just at the edge of the moor. These, it would appear, were the last persons but one who saw Doctor Kenmore alive.

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